

A PUBLICATION FOR LEADERSHIP PROFESSIONALS

*where best practice meets next practice*

# THE MOBIUS STRIP

FALL 2018 SUPPLEMENT



## INCLUDED IN THIS ISSUE

THE VOYAGE  
OF YOUR LIFE

by Mobius Chief  
Thought Leader,  
Erica Ariel Fox

FLYING WITHOUT  
A NET

by Mobius Senior Expert  
Thomas DeLong

THE PRINCIPLES OF  
SYSTEMIC INTELLIGENCE

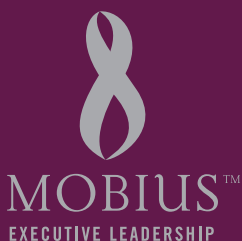
by Mobius Transformational  
Faculty Members  
Paul Zonneveld and Mieke Jacobs

THE LARGER SELF

by Mobius  
Senior Expert  
Dr. Dick Schwartz

7 LAWS OF ENOUGH

by Mobius Transformational  
Faculty Member  
Jennifer Cohen and  
Mobius Coach Gina LaRoche



MOBIUS EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP  
U.S. +1 781-237-1362  
LONDON + 44 20 3286 8388  
info@mobiusleadership.com  
www.mobiusleadership.com





THE  
NEXT PRACTICE  
INSTITUTE

## SAVE THE DATES

**2019**  
**ANNUAL GATHERING**  
**DECEMBER 8 – 13, 2019**  
**BOSTON, MA**

**2020**  
**ANNUAL GATHERING**  
**OCTOBER 4 – 9, 2020**  
**BOSTON, MA**

*Details to follow*

For more information, please email  
[NPI@mobiusleadership.com](mailto:NPI@mobiusleadership.com)



[www.mobiusleadership.com/next-practice-institute](http://www.mobiusleadership.com/next-practice-institute)

# This is the voyage of your life

Egon Zehnder talks with Erica Ariel Fox,  
Mobius Chief Thought Leader



**Erica Ariel Fox** has dedicated her professional life to senior leadership development. She's taught at Harvard Law School for over twenty years, and is *The New York Times* Best-selling author of *Winning from Within*. She's a globally-recognized innovator in advising C-suite executives, and is also the co-founder of Mobius Executive Leadership. Reflecting a shared commitment to CEOs and top-level development, Mobius and Egon Zehnder have worked collaboratively on developing world-changing leaders for many years. We spoke with Erica in Berlin about her experiences helping senior executives to embark on what she calls the "voyage" from self-discovery to leadership greatness.

## **Q** EGON ZEHNDER: Erica, what defines the ideal leader today?

**ERICA ARIEL FOX:** Ideal leaders today realize they need to understand and direct more than their company, more than their market segment, and more than their P&L. For anyone with authority, their capacity for extraordinary leadership now comes from a passion to understand themselves, combined with a commitment to lifelong development as a leader and as a human being. They also appreciate that the days are over when results-orientation and hitting performance targets were enough. Employees, customers, clients, and corporate boards all want leaders who know who they are, who value relationships, and who inspire people with a sense of purpose. This comes as a surprise to many people who've had successful careers in business and now see the world has changed. In the past, executives were judged on their expertise and their results. What

mattered? Strategy. Finance. Operations. Marketing. Compliance. Business schools prepared future corporate leaders to manage these areas of a company. In some cases, they gave a nod to "soft skills," like requiring a class in negotiation or communication. But the preparation they gave for entering the world of work focused more on financial transactions and business strategy. It encouraged competitive drive as the fuel of success.

Over time, this kind of expertise created incredible value along many important dimensions. But that model can't thrive anymore. The human dimension of leadership has taken center stage. Ideal leaders today blend traditional business strengths with more human qualities, like authenticity and compassion for others. Most importantly, they have curiosity about what drives them. Self-awareness is now a central driver of success. A self-aware leader helps an organization be more self-aware so there's a huge multiplier effect.

## This is new territory for many business leaders. How did we get here?

The pace of change and level of complexity in the world today is extraordinary. Our lives are shaped by things that didn't exist ten years ago, even five years ago. Big data. Social media. Disruptive technologies. With this mind-boggling complexity and speed of innovation came the loss of basic stability. Industries that we took for granted have disappeared. Robotics and machine learning leave us wondering what the future of work will look like. We're surrounded by trends most of us don't understand, like artificial intelligence, or cryptocurrency. All of this puts enormous pressure on our systems. It's tough to keep up. Robert Kegan is a researcher and scholar in adult development at Harvard's Graduate School of Education. He described this situation well in a book he wrote called *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*.

In other turbulent times, people turned to institutions they trusted. But today, many people have lost that faith. We have unprecedented distrust of government, the media, the church. Civic polarization is so intense, it tears at the fabric of communities, and even families. And trust in leadership has been shaken.

So, how did we get here? We're living now at the intersection of these two trends. On the one hand, the speed and magnitude of change makes our heads spin. At the same time, we don't know where to turn, because we've lost faith in our traditional sources of strength and resilience.

So many people now feel confused, overwhelmed, at times hopeless, or lost. Because the more typical institutions don't appeal to them, many are looking to company heads to help them make sense of things, to give them a sense of place. This is entirely new territory for executives. When today's leaders began their careers, people weren't looking to them to provide the ground beneath their feet. What I see more and more is business leaders are being asked to take a stand and – almost as a collective of CEOs — to become a leadership institution in and of themselves. An ideal leader today feels that existential need in their people, and rises to meet it. The best CEOs and corporate leaders still achieve extraordinary results. At the same time, they genuinely connect with this unease in people. They communicate, in ways big and small, “it's all going to be okay.”

## Are CEOs prepared to go on this “self-discovery” voyage?

One of the things I've found is that high-performing people can climb the ladder of success, yet arrive to the top only to ask themselves, “is this all there is?” Facing that question, some get disconnected from who they truly are, and turn on autopilot. They still deliver results, but they're going through the motions. Others begin a journey. They seek answers to deeper, timeless questions like: what is the meaning of life? What is the meaning of *my* life? Either way, the path forward includes a turn inward. For some it brings re-discovering the inspiration, vitality and joy that got lost along the way. Other people uncover something they've never found before: a way to lead not just from skill and expertise, but also from wisdom.

Another group engages with self-discovery simply because they want to keep developing. At senior levels, people know it's not a matter of gaining new knowledge, or acquiring another “toolbox.” Experiencing a leadership breakthrough requires cultivating the qualities of *being* that enable us to live, and lead from the best parts of ourselves. These qualities are already within us: they are the parts that think, feel, yearn and do. But all too often they are out of balance, with some aspects over-developed and other aspects under-used.

As I give talks and teach executive off-sites around the world on this material, people grasp immediately the idea of integrating all parts of themselves into their everyday interactions – the practical, the analytical, the emotional and the inspirational. They recognize quickly how they have disowned essential parts of themselves, and further, how denying these aspects gets in their way when they negotiate. They see right away how working toward their own wholeness will help them be better executives, public sector leaders, parents, consultants, spouses, friends and colleagues.

## You like to say that great leaders manage themselves first ...

Yes, but when people think about that, they think of time management or stress management or dealing with the external world: “How do I balance my work and my family?” But what I mean is managing your

inner world: the thoughts you have, your emotions, and your reactivity to others. There's a straight line from these internal experience to the actions that people take and the consequences that they produce. When leaders don't like their results, they have a tendency to look at everyone around them, not noticing that actually, those results came from their own actions, and their actions came from their mindset. The ability and the willingness to say, "My mindset has been so helpful to getting me to this senior role, but now that I am at the helm, I actually need to unpack it and create it anew." This takes a lot of strength and is a road to greatness.

Self-awareness is fundamental, and then there's more. It takes courage to admit to yourself where you really are. The key to genuine self-awareness is to recognize there are many different parts that make up your self, not just one. That's part of the hunger for mastery that we see in people who truly understand all these different aspects of who they are and how they can bring the best of who they are into the organizations that they lead.

**Q You say there are different aspects that make up your self, you use four components – the Dreamer, the Thinker, the Lover and the Warrior that you call The Big Four. Can you explain what you mean?**

Leading mythologist Joseph Campbell described each of us as "a hero with a thousand faces." I think mastering a thousand faces sounds a bit daunting. If you have all of these different sides of you, how can you even begin to get a hold on them?

To help people develop as leaders I focus on a small set of those hundreds of faces. I call the group The Big Four. They are:

- your Dreamer
- your Thinker
- your Lover
- your Warrior

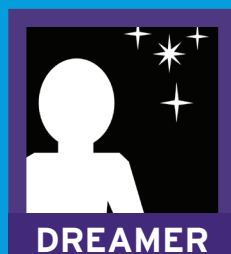
The Big Four are universal, and relevant to the way you function every day. They're also most likely to trip you up if you don't see them coming. Since I consult to a lot of businesses, I sometimes describe The Big Four as a leadership team, occupying your internal executive suite:

- The Chief Executive Officer: CEO, or Dreamer who cares about creativity and future vision
- The Chief Financial Officer: CFO, or Thinker invested in reason and analysis
- The Chief Human Resources Officer: CHRO, or Lover engaged with emotion and relationships
- The Chief Operating Officer: COO, or Warrior determined to achieve results and protect what matters.

Sitting around a conference room table, these leaders would bring their own expertise and priorities to the conversation. If anyone missed the meeting, the team would make decisions that lacked a perspective vital to the company's success.

Without the CEO, they could miss the bold vision

## THE WINNING FROM WITHIN® BIG FOUR



**An ideal leader today feels the existential need in their people, and rises to meet it. The best CEOs and corporate leaders still achieve extraordinary results. At the same time, they genuinely connect with this unease in people. They communicate, in ways big and small, “it’s all going to be okay.”**

that’s essential to an innovative strategy. No CFO, and the budget collapses. Without HR, the right people don’t get hired or developed. If the COO’s absent, it’s all talk and no action.

A business will find itself in trouble if it doesn’t envision possibilities, can’t appreciate a 360-degree perspective, fails to care for its people, or turns in lackluster performance. This is true for you too.

Wanting, thinking, feeling and doing — these are part of the shared human experience. The Big Four represent your capacity to dream about the future, to analyze and solve problems, to build relationships with people, and to take effective action. How people *express* The Big Four varies by culture. But the basic functions cross boundaries.

### **Q What would you say to a skeptic who argues that self-discovery has no impact on a CEO’s success or failure?**

As the world reinvents itself, the only way to win is to reinvent yourself, too. The number one imperative in business today is to learn the inner path of leadership, what I’ve called “winning from within.” In fact, that means that as the world transforms all around you, you need to change, too. Think about it. Uber is upending taxis. Hotels lose ground daily to Airbnb. Google threatens to replace everyone, even automakers if they scale the self-driving car. What happens to industries that fail to innovate in these times?

To stay competitive and thrive in today’s world, companies need to release expectations from the past. To open themselves to entirely new mindsets about what their brand means. To let their very identity evolve. The same is true for you. At the core of my work with people is helping them to ask “who am I?” and “who can I become?” Then together we use *Winning from Within*<sup>®</sup> methodology to discover new answers.

I advise CEOs to embrace this principle: no business can stay a leader in its field without reinvention, and the same is true of individual leaders. If you continue to function according to past expectations, you will fail.

The inner “order” or “structure” I’m talking about is the story you tell yourself about who you are. Your personal myth. In roles of influence, that story becomes your leadership myth as well. Releasing old myths that no longer serve you, and replacing them with a new, more expansive story about who you are, is the process of “reinventing” yourself.

Revising your personal myth fortifies your inner structure to thrive in a new environment. In my work with senior leaders, I’ve found that understanding all of who they are — the revealed parts and the concealed parts — provides that powerful inner lattice to keep them on their feet, while at the same time allowing new parts of them to emerge.

Unless we practice this inner innovation, human beings see what we expect to see, think what we expect to think, feel what we expect to feel, and do what we



always do. But holding tight to expectations, built on the inner structure of our past, we are too fragile. We will break, and fall. In these times of massive change, we need leaders who embrace the complexity and emerging possibility of the world, and meet it with the full power of the complexity and emerging possibility within themselves. That is the disruption and reinvention “from within” that will take us into the future.

### **Q You describe every leader as a “Voyager.” What do you mean?**

The “voyage” is a timeless motif for self-discovery and fulfilling your potential, both as a person and as a leader. As Voyagers we live in a state of paradox. We need audacity and humility. The hunger to grow and acceptance of where we are now. The urgency to act and the patience to let things ripen.

The Voyager in us keeps us moving, rolling with the punches, falling down and picking ourselves back up. We adapt to new circumstances. Rise to meet new occasions. It’s our Voyager who learns from our successes and our mistakes.

By whatever name, societies around the world converge on the notion that we develop as we travel. They likewise agree that the journey to growth has an outer expression and an inner dimension. There is a part of each of us designed for this very process. That’s the part of human nature that I’m calling the Voyager.

It’s true that in many journey stories, protagonists “leave” where they are to take a voyage. At the same time, throughout folklore of civilizations, people search for things in faraway places, only to find what they seek right where they already are. Like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, who needs only to click her heels three times to get home, the lesson you need is available the moment you recognize it.

Hard as it may sound, that’s the invitation that your Voyager gives you. This is your life. Can you live well and lead wisely, while being true to yourself? Only you can decide. As Charles Dickens’ *David Copperfield* writes, “Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show.”

Your Voyager stands for the idea that you have choices, and that *ultimately, you create your life.*

### **Q You’ve talked about how important it is for leaders to communicate a sense of purpose. What does this mean for a CEO?**

It’s like night and day when you see leaders who are coming from a sense of purpose. It changes the level of employee engagement from people feeling like, “Well, I know what I’m supposed to do today,” to, “I know why it matters.” It’s the way to mobilize people, to galvanize people to keep going to conquer a really difficult problem, to hang in there.

For example, engineers, scientists, often spend years trying to solve the same problem, and they might feel, “We’ve been working on this for five years, and we can’t find the answer.” And if it’s just a task, then why do you keep doing it? You would give up. But if you see this as your mission — you’re going to save lives, you’re going to solve bigger problems — then you have a purpose that keeps you going. Resilience comes from purpose.

So what we want to help people see is: This isn’t your journey as a CEO. This is the voyage of your life. It’s so much bigger. And yes, it’s about leading this organization, but to put it in the starkest terms: What is the legacy of your life? What do you want people to say about you as a human being when you’re gone? Being a CEO is part of that, but it couldn’t ever encompass or express the full breadth of the purpose of your life.

**Q Clients often ask us: “Can people really, really change their inner self?”**

Yes, they can. At every age, in whatever stage of life they’re in. The good news is, although historically, social scientists have been saying for a long time that

you can change and you can grow, the blessing we have now is neuroscience. We have brain researchers telling us about neuroplasticity; telling us that, even at a neurochemical level, the brain expands over time throughout all the decades of your life. So even if you want a purely scientific, research-based answer: Yes, people can really change their inner self. I personally have seen the process thousands of times. Everything I know, 25 years of experience, three decades of research tell me: yes, yes, yes.



**ERICA ARIEL FOX** teaches business leaders the art and science of leading yourself. She is Mobius Executive Leadership's Chief Thought Leader and the author of *The New York Times* bestselling book, *Winning from Within*, which is published in ten

languages. As an Influencer on LinkedIn, Erica has over 150,000 followers. She teaches negotiation at Harvard Law School and, together with her partners at Mobius Executive Leadership, she is a senior advisor to CEOs and top teams.

**EgonZehnder**



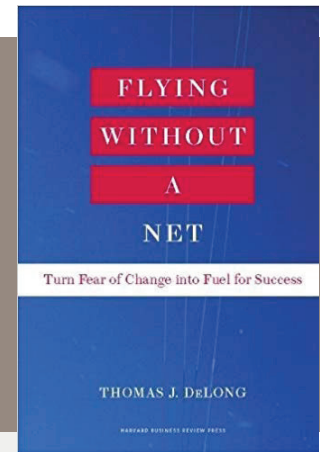
**MOBIUS**<sup>TM</sup>  
EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

**Announcing a New Partnership between Egon Zehnder and Mobius Executive Leadership**

In September of 2018 the world's pre-eminent leadership advisory firm, Egon Zehnder, and its long time collaborative partner Mobius Executive Leadership, a premier leadership development firm, announced a partnership to bring cutting-edge transformational leadership offerings to the senior most leaders in the private and public sectors. Together they will continue to offer their groundbreaking leadership immersion for chief executives, Executive Breakthrough Program; the multi-client transformational session for future CEO's and other C-suite leaders, Executive Discovery Program; and to customize the programs for individual clients wishing an in-house solution tailored to their needs. Each of these programs are based on Erica's book *Winning from Within* and integrate findings from Egon Zehnder's models on Potential, Transformational Leadership and Identity.

# Flying Without A Net: Turn Fear of Change into Fuel for Success

A book excerpt from Senior fellow and former Philip J. Stomberg Professor of Management Practice in the Organizational Behavior area at the Harvard Business School, Thomas DeLong, who also serves as a Mobius Senior Expert.



**Drawing on his extensive research and consulting work, Professor DeLong's book examines:**

- 1 Roots of high achievers' anxiety: fear of being wrong, lack of a sense of purpose, and a craving for human connection.**

---

- 2 Destructive behaviors we adopt to relieve our anxiety: busyness, comparing ourselves to others, and blaming others for our frustrations.**

---

- 3 The behaviors we must adopt to gain strength from vulnerability: putting the past behind us and seeking honest feedback.**

**We are delighted that Thomas DeLong will join the faculty for the 2018 Next Practice Institute where he will deliver a keynote address on Thriving in the Age of Anxiety. For more about Thomas DeLong's work, please visit Resources within the Next Practice Institute section of the website.**

Organizations are filled with smart, ambitious people who are less productive and satisfied than they should be. Doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, bankers, and business leaders and their managers find that they can't reach the goals they set or find the meaning they seek. Yet some of these high-drive professionals overcome their fears, adopt new behaviors, and lead enormously successful, fulfilled lives. Unfortunately, they are a minority.

What is going on? Why are the best and the brightest in all age groups and in all professions struggling like never before? Perhaps more significantly, what can you do about it if you're a high-need-for achievement professional? How do you escape this malaise and become more effective, successful, and fulfilled?

You learn to fly without a net. In other words, you discover how to move through the anxieties that keep you from taking action; you begin to gradually trust your ability to learn, grow, and change and you realize that this ability will help you in your chosen profession. Flying without a net doesn't happen overnight. It's a process that begins with awareness of the forces that escalate your anxieties, act as traps, and cause you to turn to unproductive behaviors for relief. The process also involves adopting counterintuitive practices that give you the courage to do the right things poorly before doing the right things well. And it's a process that requires you to be vulnerable, something that driven professionals don't like to be. To achieve more and gain greater satisfaction

from your work, though, you must be willing to open yourself up to new learning and experiences that may make you feel uncertain at best and incompetent at worst. These feelings are temporary and a prelude to a greater depth and breadth in your professional and personal life.

\*\*\*

**The Challenge of Doing the Right Thing Poorly**

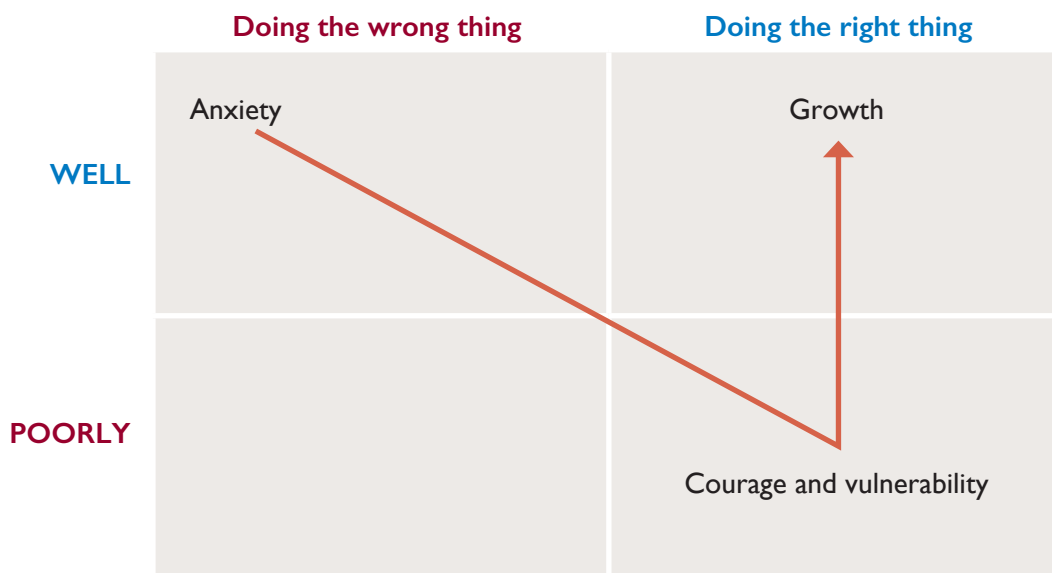
During the final moments of a four-day program, I told the Tiger Woods story [about how he rebuilt his swing, referenced earlier in the book] to a group of executives. Right after I finished the story, a forty-five-year-old executive raised his hand and confronted me in front of the group. He said, “Professor DeLong, I don’t like your story about Tiger Woods. I don’t think the story is fair.” I wanted to cut him down with a cynical reply. My palms started sweating. I experienced shortness of breath. I managed to ask him why it wasn’t a fair story. He responded, “Professor, the reason your story isn’t fair is that Tiger Woods was able to work on his swing and go to the

lower right quadrant [see Exhibit I] and only his coach was there. There was only one person there to watch him do poorly. I have forty-five hundred employees in my company, and if I try anything new they will all see me. It could be humiliating. I have to set an example of doing the right thing well all the time.” I didn’t really know what to say. The room became very quiet. Students waited for me to react. I realized that the silence was the best teacher. I simply said, “I guess you are right.”

The executive had made a great observation about Tiger Woods and himself. The fundamental question out there for all to see, was whether this leader or any of the participants in the group realized what it would take to get over themselves and be courageous enough to try something that they might not be initially competent in. The challenge this executive had raised for the whole class was now in the open. I realized that for high-need-for-achievement personalities, looking good and managing image are primary concerns; the last thing these people want is to look dumb or anything other than very competent.

**EXHIBIT I: BREAKING THE CYCLE**

By moving to the lower right quadrant from either quadrant on the left, you begin the process of change





Years ago I resented Nike's advertising campaign "Image is Everything." I wondered how any company could make such a blatant fallacy a major marketing theme. Then I grasped that Nike's marketing team was just being honest. They were making me very uncomfortable because I knew at some level that the truth hurts. In the fast-paced world we live in, image is everything. Whether we're young managers or senior executives, we don't want to tarnish that image. Unfortunately, this means that we're sentencing ourselves to a superficial existence, that we can't change our behaviors and try something that makes us uncomfortable because we're worried how we'll look to the people that surround us. So rather than doing the right thing poorly until we get better, we resign ourselves to doing the wrong thing well over and over again.

\*\*\*

### **Comparing: how to break your heart every time**

In the world of social sciences, the technical term for comparing ourselves with others is social relativity. It is the process of using external measures to determine how we think we are doing, of defining our successes by external criteria. This process begins early in life, and it is instilled in us by many factors. In fact, the process is so baked into everything we experience that it often feels like we have no control over the emotions that cause us to compare ourselves to others. It becomes a reflex rather than a calculated action. In

certain cultures, the process of comparing impacts behavior all the time and in every way.

\*\*\*

When I joined the Harvard Business School faculty, I received cards and letters from friends and family congratulating me on achieving one of the ultimate "brass rings" of academics. I felt pretty good about myself until I visited my assigned office in Morgan Hall. In an adjacent office was a colleague who had written something like twelve books and was an internationally recognized scholar in the area of organizational innovation. He had a beautiful summer house near Cape Cod. In addition, he was gracious and supportive. There wasn't much to dislike. So every day I came to work and walked past his office door, I felt like I was behind in the race. Compared with my colleague, I had accomplished so little over such a long career; my two measly books were more like an embarrassment, given his output. When I passed his office and he wasn't there, I was sure that he was meeting with Jack Welch or someone famous. And as much as I wanted to dislike him, I found myself disliking me because of what he had done and what I had not accomplished. Mind you, this happened almost every day. And it didn't happen at the end of the day but at the beginning. I'm sure you are asking why I didn't just walk to my office from the other direction so I didn't have to begin the process of comparing? Because the situation on the other side was worse.



**“Rather than doing the right thing poorly until we get better, we resign ourselves to doing the wrong thing well over and over again.”**

\*\*\*

**Real benchmarks versus false measures**

I would urge you to find your own measure for providing a constant reminder that you're on track (or not) and help you avoid falling into the comparing behavior trap. Consider the following measures:

- **Capstone progress:** Chart your progress toward your ideal position, determining if you're acquiring the experiences and expertise that make you a viable candidate for that position.
- **Satisfaction index:** Keep track of how meaningful and fulfilling your work is; create a numerical satisfaction scale that depends on how much you're enjoying what you do and how purposeful it seems; take a reading regularly.
- **Learning level:** Assess the knowledge and skills you're acquiring and whether you're becoming an "expert" in any one area (this is a more subtle measure, but it still can serve as a viable alternative to comparing behaviors).

\*\*\*

**Even the best leaders can be trapped.**

It's not that high-need-for-achievement individuals can eliminate their comparing reflex completely, nor should they. Throughout history, our greatest generals, CEOs, lawyers, and other professionals have driven themselves to achieve significant objectives by trying to outdo others. Comparing becomes a trap, however, when people become so consumed by measuring themselves against others that they fail to step back and see how it's impacting their actions.

Ernest Shackleton was a wanderer and an explorer, and is perhaps best known today for preserving the lives of twenty-five men over an eighteen-month period on an expedition to the South Pole. The fact that he felt he was better at what he did than two other men in the "exploration business" grated on him night and day. Robert Peary seemed to be one step ahead of him in terms of finding places to discover. Peary had attempted to discover the North Pole, only to lose most of his men and almost die himself in the process. Peary was lauded, while

Shackleton felt in his bones that at the end of the day Peary had failed in his efforts. Norway's Roald Amundsen also was world-famous for his ability to discover new lands and publicize his expeditions. Because of his comparing reflex, Shackleton was driven to put together a team of twenty-five men to walk across Antarctica.

The timing could not have been worse. World War I was beginning to take shape; all of Europe was tense. Shackleton desperately needed financial support, but there wasn't much to be had. Finally, he threw his materials together and headed for the South Pole. He made two stops in South America, one at South Georgia, on the tip of the continent, where there was a small whaling village. There a number of whalers told him there were more ice floes than usual. They warned Shackleton to beware of what might be coming his way.

Thirty miles from Antarctica and the starting point of his trek, his ship, the *Endurance*, was surrounded by ice and became stuck. Shackleton pulled off a miracle, keeping his crew alive over a year and a half of living on ice, floating in the stormy ocean in small boats, ending up on a rock-filled island, and finally getting back to South Georgia. When he returned to England with every member of his crew alive, his entrance into the English harbor was met with a yawn. Everyone was focused on the war. While pulling off this miraculous adventure, he didn't achieve his goal of surpassing his two fellow explorers in terms of name recognition and acclaim.

So while comparing may have catalyzed his quest, it also may have prevented him from realizing his dream. If he had planned better, created a more viable strategy, and implemented it at the right time, he might have achieved his goal. Comparing, then, can create a trap that not only locks people into routines that prevent learning and growth but also causes them to pursue goals without sound strategies.

### Comparing via Various Metrics

When we keep upping the ante in our comparing behaviors, we can throw just about anything into the

pot. Consider a partial list of what we use as a basis for comparison with others:

- Salary
- Bonuses
- Company performance
- Perks (access to company jets, stays at top hotels, golf junkets, luxurious office space, etc.)
- Vacations
- Houses, cars, boats
- Publicity (being on business magazine top 100 lists, flattering profiles, etc.)
- Reputation in industry
- Membership on boards

**“Your dreams can obviously make you, but they can also destroy you.”**

Go over this list and ask yourself when you've compared yourself in any of these categories with others in your company, your industry, or the business world in general. Then, reflect on your comparing behaviors and ask these questions:

- Did my comparing behaviors cause me to feel dissatisfied with my performance or my job? Did they take away from what otherwise were significant achievements?
- Did my comparing behaviors prevent me from achieving the goals that, with hindsight, I most wanted to achieve?
- Did my comparing behaviors cause me to expend a great deal of time and energy fretting about what I didn't possess rather than expend it on what I might accomplish?

While the most obvious form of comparing may be measuring your career progress against that of a peer, there are many others. While the most common negative consequence may involve never feeling satisfied with your achievements, there are other counterproductive effects.

Finally, I'd like to share a classic event that invites people to compare themselves with others: reunions. More specifically, I want to tell you about the Harvard Business School class reunion. Certainly people

attend these reunions to see friends from the past. But there is another reason they come back: to judge how they have done relative to their colleagues. As a faculty member who is invited to speak at the events, I have noticed that the younger the alumni reunion class is, the more comparing that takes place. In fact, I will no longer speak at the five year reunion — it's too hard to create discussions that are in-depth and reflective with all the comparing that goes on.

Those alumni back for the five-year reunions are guarded, wear just a little too much makeup and cologne, and are generally adopting invulnerable poses. This makes it difficult if not impossible for them to relax and confess that there have been bumps in the road. There is much more talk about when they get their first payout or how many square feet they have in their new homes or where they are going on vacation. I ran into one graduate who was scheduled to attend her five-year reunion but had just been laid off. When I saw her I asked her if she planned on attending the reunion. She blushed and looked cornered. She then confessed that it was too stressful—there was no way she could attend not having a job.

When I responded that no one there cared too much about such a detail because they were too concerned about themselves, she became dismissive. She replied, “You just don't understand. I lived with these people for two years. While they will act supportive, they will think that I haven't made it. It will reinforce their views of me because I wasn't one of the smartest students in the class.” I smiled and told her that there would be others who didn't feel as though they had been successful. But I realized my words of support were falling on deaf ears. I wondered after my brief interaction with this former student whether only those who saw themselves as successes showed up to the reunions. If that were true, no wonder the conversations were more shallow and superficial than those of the alumni who were older and wiser and who had fallen off their career paths more than once.

On the other hand, when I facilitated discussions with alumni who had been gone for twenty-five years, they jumped into deeper conversation, much more willing to discuss their lives, successes, and challenges.

My colleague Leslie Perlow and I wrote selected profiles of alumni from 1976 to use as case studies in the first-year curriculum on organizational behavior. The first time we taught these six stories, we were blown away by how much commotion was created.

The students thought we had intentionally selected six alumni who had had particularly troubled lives as reference points. When we told them that they were selected from a stratified random sample, they were shocked. There had been two divorces, a child born with learning disabilities, the death of a spouse. The students reported that they left the classroom not encouraged by the future but discouraged and depressed. They were comparing their dreams with the realities of alumni who had lived full but flawed lives. These current students had envisioned some smooth path to capstone positions and great personal satisfaction. The reality was that the six alumni we profiled, though highly accomplished in certain ways, had also experienced a variety of setbacks and problems.

The lesson: you can fall victim to comparisons with impossible dreams. I'm not suggesting that you refrain from dreaming, only that you don't become discouraged because your dreams may not match up with other people's realities. No doubt, our students saw themselves twenty-five years from that moment and were disheartened. This is an insidious form of comparing, and it can cause people to lose their drive and their dreams if they're not careful. Your dreams can obviously make you, but they can also destroy you. You may settle for less and never open yourselves up to all the possibilities and the risks a truly great life requires. ■



**Thomas J. DeLong, a Mobius Senior Expert, is a Senior fellow and former Philip J. Stomberg Professor of Management Practice in the Organizational Behavior area at the Harvard Business School. Since 1997 DeLong has taught over**

**15,000 MBA's and Executives both on campus and throughout the world. His research focuses on the challenges facing individuals and organizations in the process of change.**

# The Principles of Systemic Intelligence

(from the forthcoming book *Mergers & Acquisitions: How to Turn a Forced Marriage into a Loving One*)

by Mobius Transformational Faculty Members Paul Zonneveld and Mieke Jacobs

Paul Zonneveld and Mieke Jacobs have worked with organizations around the world for more than twenty years, researching the impact of systemic dynamics, entanglements and traumatic events on large organizations and top teams (as a result of restructuring, mergers and acquisitions, executive leadership transitions, fraud, accidents, transfer of ownership, etc.) What they have discovered is that navigating complex organizational challenges with systemic intelligence, using the principles and interventions from constellation work, leads to profound breakthroughs.

The principles of systemic intelligence 1) Purpose 2) Connection and Inclusion 3) Order and 4) Exchange help us appreciate the deeper whole beyond the distracting parts and symptoms that typically capture our attention and often mis-direct our energy. While these principles are of special relevance to mergers and acquisitions, which is the context of our forthcoming book, systemic intelligence can guide us in any situation where system dynamics are at play including organizations grappling with the full breadth of strategic and operational issues to societal and interpersonal issues closer to home.

---

**“The system is perfectly designed to deliver  
the results it is delivering now.”**

---

## SYSTEMIC PRINCIPLES

In our interactions with executive or change teams, we put this provoking thought on the table as an opening statement: The system is perfectly designed to deliver the results it is delivering now. We often get push back to this statement at first. As you can imagine, we are typically not called in when everything is bright and shining – even though it is our future vision to see the concepts and learnings from our research and this book applied in a much more proactive way, setting mergers and acquisitions up for success *before* the ink is on paper.

What we invariably find is while the synergies

between both parties have been identified, the savings carefully calculated, the new business processes redesigned by intelligent people, the integration plan was ambitious yet achievable — the results are lagging or even declining.

The way we have experienced working with the Systemic Principles in companies and organizations is that they support us to identify and understand the symptoms, lead us to the underlying dynamics, and can be used as the continuous compass to navigate through the never-ending complexity and change in volatile and unpredictable circumstances.

The Systemic Principles are the result of a multi-disciplinary field of research and phenomenological experience, including but not limited to the domain of family systems and constellations — hence our metaphor of an arranged or forced marriage for the newly formed company, that is literally trying to form a new family system, composed of two or more single families with their own underlying dynamics and history.

The four main systemic principles can be seen as the natural laws of systems, translated to the business reality.

As we will illustrate with numerous stories, not respecting these principles creates entanglements or constrictions which lead to unhealthy dynamics and unintended consequences, often reflected in disappointing or disastrous results, loss of market share, a demotivated workforce, talent depletion, and more. Understanding and respecting these principles leads to flow. The ultimate goal is to be able to use them at all times to navigate in a dynamic complex environment.

In our experience, these four principles are universal, globally applicable and have local specificities. They are Purpose, Connection and Inclusion; Order and Occupying's One's Space; and Exchange.

### I. PURPOSE

Most executive leadership teams believe that they have clearly defined their purpose, often described

and nailed to the wall as a vision statement. Having seen many of these, it is as if there is only a limited vocabulary available to write these—a small exhaustive list of words to choose from, the only freedom lies in the construction of the sentence. The “best and highest” are often combined with terms like “quality, safety, customer satisfaction, delivery excellence, innovation, sustainability and employee satisfaction.” We strive for “zeros” in areas like “footprint, incidents, community impact, energy consumption” or aim to “double” something like “revenue, market share, market penetration, net promoter score” — preferably done by a nicely rounded year, like 2020.

When we talk about purpose, we mean something more than these vision, mission and strategy statements. In essence, it comes down to this key question: *What is society inviting you to contribute to?* That might sound naïve at first, but it defines purpose in connection with the world around us. This broader definition of purpose, taking into account the interconnections to society, is vital for the longer-term sustainability of the company. What is the deeper need your company is asked to fulfil? Just ‘beating competition’, ‘doubling our market share’ or ‘penetrating the Chinese market’ is not what we mean.

There are numerous examples of companies who have not been able to adjust their course when society lost value for what they were initially doing, or when that original need was suddenly being met by a cheaper or higher value replacement product or service. They stayed attached to their isolated purpose

---

**What are you trying to achieve in your life and work that may be entangled in systemic issues?**

**What might you learn by asking these questions of the situation:**

**I) PURPOSE:** *What is the true purpose or desired outcome of this effort, initiative, or even relationship?*

---

**II) CONNECTION AND INCLUSION:** *Have I considered not just the obvious, but all the people involved?*

---

**III) ORDER:** *What is the “natural order” of each player? To begin to examine this conceptually, ask yourself: what are the different ways to organize each of the parts and players?*

---

**IV) EXCHANGE:** *Is there a reciprocity, a balance of give and take, between each of the parts and players?*

---

for a long time, leading to a total decline or bankruptcy. Obviously, there are as many examples of companies who *did* understand that their business model or strongest brand was reaching its shelf life and that have been agile in finding a new purpose. It is important to keep the true meaning of purpose in mind. Systems strive to survive. We have seen numerous examples of compensating mechanisms, that were covering the early warning signals indicating that it was time to repurpose. Companies directing all their attention and their most experienced resources to that one large contract, while losing sight of refilling the pipeline, being utterly surprised to find themselves in a decline when that arrangement came to an end. Or strategic planning teams suggesting one acquisition after the other, burdening the newly acquired partners with a mother company that lacks innovation.

When understood well and defined in relation to the broader societal needs, a strong purpose gives creative direction to an organization, confirms its right to be in the game and will give you valuable insights to stay agile in an ever-changing environment.

Next to purpose, we also talk about leading principles — mostly will be a subset of the purpose. Companies often refer to their core values as their leading principles. We challenge whether they are, when they look like a copy/paste wish list and seem disconnected from the purpose. Leading principles can sometimes by nature vary for different parts of the organization and dealing with this bottleneck or pain point in the system is one of the key ongoing challenges in the larger set-up.

We found one of the most obvious examples of that in the healthcare industry, where even though they share the same purpose — taking care of the sick and disabled in society — the medical crew often has different leading principles. Doctors, physicians or surgeons, as they confirmed with the Hippocratic Oath, are mostly focused on healing, repairing, fixing and as a result, keeping patients alive as long as possible. The nursing crew, however, often has *patient care* and *quality of life* as the number one leading principle. Finding the right balance between both is the crucial cross-functional challenge. When purpose and leading principles are cascaded down into the organization, it also brings the decision power to the

**“When understood well and defined in relation to the broader societal needs, a strong purpose gives creative direction to an organization, confirms its right to be in the game and will give you valuable insights to stay agile in an ever-changing environment.”**

right level, allowing each echelon to focus on the right combination of “run & maintain” versus “innovate & regenerate.”

With some of the most visible mergers and acquisitions in mind, the key question becomes whether there is a common purpose to be found, or even whether the purpose of both is compatible.

There is an additional question to add, namely “What is the purpose of the M&A?” There is obviously a strategic intent and ambition for it, but what is *beyond* the plans for inorganic growth, vertical or horizontal integration, doubling the market share or expanding to new industries or territories?

In all our interactions, whether it is in an interview during a diagnostics phase or in a strategy session with the C-suite or the integration team, we ask them at a certain point in time: “What was this merger or acquisition an excuse for?” That might sound like a strange and rather judgmental question, but to our surprise, every single person we asked had an answer to it. They never thought of it as an excuse or didn’t look at it from that angle, but they could all pinpoint what exactly made this M&A a diverging tactic, the fundamental issue the M&A addressed, which critical



quality was previously missing or what aspect needed to stay hidden.

## II. CONNECTION AND INCLUSION

This principle is also known as: Everybody who belongs to the system is entitled to have its place. Nobody can leave the system unnoticed.

“*The system prevails over the individuals,*” is one of our other provoking statements. The common belief is that people are your most valuable asset, literally expressed as your human capital. We believe that these two concepts are not in contradiction. We strive for the value for the human factor, for creating a workplace where there is flow and vitality. However, who you need – how many, which roles, what skill set, etc. – depends on your purpose. It’s not a matter of creating space for everybody, just to give everybody a sense of belonging and work. The goal is to create the organization necessary to achieve your goals.

The company’s purpose and its ambitions for the period to come, in relation to its environment, will define the right organizational design, resulting in a certain structure with different departments, layers and in the end, roles to be filled.

It’s very critical for each individual, but equally so for each department or business unit or plant site, to know and understand their place in the system, which will define their contribution to the whole.

“Everybody has their place” is valid for individuals and equally valid for departments or specific assets. As in a case example used in the book, adding a

customer care department, without clarifying its role and redefining the role of the existing customer service department, whose main purpose is also to serve the clients and increase customer satisfaction, impacts the entire organization. Internal planning and production did not understand anymore who decides on priorities and who is authorized to intervene in the production wheel.

We recently worked with a merged banking cohort. In the demographics part of their annual employee engagement survey they offered the respondents two options: ex-A and ex-F. You might hear the more elegant term ‘legacy A’ and ‘legacy B’, but the impact is the same. People are being boxed into two groups, connected to the past. On top of that, there was a third group of people who did not know what to select, as they joined the company after the merger. They had no attachment to either of the two legacy companies and, given the rest of the organization was still living in the past, were not able to find or connect to a new identity.

We use this principle of *connection*, in relation to departments, functions and people. There is also the need to connect to certain prevailing or hidden feelings and emotions: like mourning, loss or exhaustion. It is vital to connect to whoever or whatever is asking for or in need of attention so the system can go back to flow. Many different dynamics occur when this principle is not respected, as illustrated shortly.

An additional aspect of this systemic principle is the notion that “nobody can leave the system unnoticed.”

**“ There is also the need to connect to certain prevailing or hidden feelings and emotions: like mourning, loss or exhaustion. It is vital to connect to whoever or whatever is asking for and in need of attention, so the system can go back to flow. ”**

If you have ever seen Russell Crowe in Ridley Scott’s *Robin Hood*, you might recall this scene — it happens in many king, queen and knight movies — where Robin Hood, in his disguise as Knight Robin Loxley gives the death notice of King Richard Lionheart to the King’s mother. When he hands over the crown to her, you see the pain on her face and a minute later she crowns her younger son John, by saying: “The King is dead, long live the King.” The witnessing noble and peasant crowd instantly kneels for the new king.

There is a sad and awkward feeling that whoever you are, you are interchangeable. You will be immediately forgotten and your place will be refilled the moment you walk out and close the door. This is comparable to how many companies handle significant changes.

- “You have been with this company for twenty-seven years. We have just been acquired by a large foreign investor. We have exciting times ahead of us. We value your loyalty to the new owner.”
- “As a result of the synergies analysis, we have decided to let go of Peter and Suzanne. Today was also their last day. We will eliminate part of their tasks and distribute the remaining work to the rest of the team. Apart from that, nothing else will change for you.”

We forget to say goodbye to people and to honor their contributions. We assume that those left behind go back to normal right away, denying the fact that there is a new and unknown normal and that there might be strong attachments to the old — the old

way of working, the well-known dynamics, the long-held relationships, the traditions and typical jokes. As a result, those who stay behind feel their colleagues have ‘left the system unnoticed’. Their attention and energy will be focused on the empty spots in the teams, prohibiting them from moving on and adjusting to the new reality. Not handling departures well is often damaging to the rest of the team, leaving the colleagues who stay with a feeling of being treated with disrespect, even if they were not the ones who were let go. It is almost as if a part of them has left, together with the leavers, although they are physically still there. The synergy calculations often result in multi-layered spreadsheets that demonstrate the efficiency and productivity per capita at the end of the restructuring. The stretched targets are seldom reached, because this requires people to be fully present and on-board.

As M&A’s often include restructurings and retirement plans, we advise honoring the departed in almost every engagement.

### III. ORDER & OCCUPYING ONE’S SPACE

Where the previous principles defined what the company needs to reach its I) purpose (the organizational structure, which departments, how many people, which talents and skills), and II) the fact that each department and individual is entitled to a place in the system, this third principle expresses the need to understand *the order or sequence*. It answers where is my place in the system? And how can I fully occupy it?

You might wonder whether this concept of order is outdated. In these times of self-managing shifts; “Toyota-like” leaders who are visible on the shop floor and interact with their teams on a daily basis; virtual organizations; new organizational forms built on a small base structure with mostly freelance connections – it is critical to understand that order does not only equal hierarchy. It might do so in some cultures or companies, but order can be based on many different aspects.

Every system has its intrinsic order. If everybody and every subsystem has its place in the whole, order defines where that place is, how each contributes to the purpose, what is to be expected from each function and who comes first. Pretending that there is no order, not honoring or acting against the intrinsic/agreed order leads to interesting though counterproductive, self-regulating dynamics.

What defines the order of assets, business units, departments or functions, leaders and employees? There is no single answer.

Soon after the acquisition of a Danish based global company by an American-founded global player, we were hosting leadership forums for the C-level, and the next layers of leadership until N-3. As we did the introductory roundtables, the leaders from the acquiring company kept introducing themselves with their names, their titles and their number of service years with the company. Careers ranged from a minimum of eighteen years – considered the youngsters – to over forty years. Higher numbers were spoken with increasing pride. In a smaller group session the next morning, the newly acquired leaders expressed they were horrified by this. In their innovation-driven environment, people were valued for bringing in new perspectives, experience from other industries and corporations, trying new ventures and failing fast. They felt they had landed in a rigid environment with a bunch of grey-haired dinosaurs who had never set foot out of their company or their area of expertise.

Order amongst people can be determined by:

- Leading principle (What function is leading? Sales & Marketing or Production? Curing/Fixing or Quality of Life?)
- Financial stake in the business (e.g., partners who have a personal investment are higher in the order than associates who do not)
- Hierarchical position and breath of responsibility (responsibility does not necessarily equal power or might, but rather the weight and width of the responsibility for a larger whole)
- Seniority in the company or in the role
- Title, role or pay level.

Order can also be defined by: nationality; educational level; the rank/order defined in society (class can affect your rank in a company); contribution to business results; political preference or religion, and much more.

It is critically important to understand what the current order is based upon, to question whether that order is the most beneficial to the purpose and strategic vision and to be able to redefine it where needed. In our experience, it is not necessary to immediately redefine the order of a newly merged

organization. It can be unclear in the beginning how to find common ground, but *naming the differences* removes a lot of uncertainty and frustration and invites the entire organization to co-create the new identity. For example, the ‘dinosaur’ story became one of the shared integration stories, leading to some lightness with both parties.

The same list of criteria can be used to understand the order in the executive leadership team. Recently we worked with a group of global executives leading a business declining year-on-year. In the room we had the Global Managing Director, all the regional market leaders, the global functional leaders (in charge of Human Resources, Finance, Marketing and Communication), and the global owners of the content and expertise, called Practice Leaders. To illustrate order we asked them to line up according to the number of service years with the mother company.

**“The system  
prevails over  
the individuals  
within it.”**



We then asked them to line up based on the number of service years with the consulting business unit, which led to a totally different picture. The main insight came with our last instruction which was to line up in order of contribution to the business. We were curious what would happen and in this case it led to a total freeze. Nobody was moving. One could sense the discomfort with that question. Some were trying to make a joke out of it, others wanted to understand what the criteria were. In a few minutes we had an illustrative demonstration of the paralysis that was so visible in the organization. With ever-changing directives and KPI's, the employees didn't know anymore how to contribute to the business results and bring them back to growth.

Order is not only defined on an individual or leadership level, it also defines the priorities in the organizational structure and the relationships between departments. Business units or assets might be ordered by any of the following factors:

► **Size:** The larger sites are often the ones with most authority, resources, competencies and the capacity to pilot new products, processes, change programs, etc. We often see a mentor approach, where the large facilities get the additional task to provide expert assistance and coaching support to one or more smaller sites, often within the same country or business unit.

► **Contribution to revenue, profitability, cash flow:** In most companies with an extended asset footprint, there is a large variety in contribution of the different sites. Some are the eternal cash cows, while others are in a constant struggle to survive. This unbalance can have many reasons: product portfolio, local labour cost, plant layout and age. While it is important to make the order of assets transparent, an eternal unbalance in contribution to the business results will lead to other disruptive dynamics (see the last principle of exchange).

► **Product portfolio:** The product portfolio can determine the importance within the overall network. Is it a new release? A demanding range of products? A sole supply product? The most important brand? The most important ingredient for other manufacturing sites? These considerations can lift a site higher up the rank.

► **Nationality/History:** More logical seeming order can be overruled when nationality and history play an important role. Often this is not expressed openly but when you ask the organization everybody seems to know that the founding site remains 'untouchable' or that all sites in the headquarter country are always less impacted by restructurings, even when their performance does not justify it. Even when this is a conscious decision and maybe even a critical one in the founding and early growth

**BONE WOMAN**  
by Clarissa Pinkola Estés

There is an old woman who lives in a hidden place that everyone knows in their soul but few have ever seen. As in many fairy tales, she seems to wait for lost or wandering people and seekers to come to her place. She calls herself by many names, but most people call her Bone Woman.

*Her sole work is to collect bones. She collects and preserves especially that which is in danger of being lost to the world. Her cave is filled with the bones of all creatures, but her specialty is wolves. She wanders through the mountains and riverbeds, looking for wolf bones and when she has assembled an entire skeleton, when the last bone is in place and the beautiful white sculpture of the creature is laid out before her, she sits by*

*the fire and thinks about what song she will sing. At that moment, she stands over the creature, raises her arms and sings. The rib bones and leg bones of the wolf begin to flesh out and the creature becomes furred. As she sings and sings, more of the wolf comes into being, its tail curls upwards and it begins to breathe. Bone Woman sings so deep that the floor of the desert shakes and as she sings, the wolf opens its eyes, leaps up and runs down the canyon.*

*Somewhere in its running, whether by its speed or by splashing into a river or by the ray of moonlight hitting it right in the side, the wolf is suddenly transformed into a laughing woman running free towards the horizon.*

years of a company, the moment the company extends its footprint to other countries and regions and aspires to be a truly global company, favoring the founding country over the others can lead to unhealthy dynamics and poses a risk to the long-term sustainability. Bringing together two companies with a strong patriotism and attachment to the founding nationality without addressing it, often leads to an unspoken discord for years to come. We will illustrate in later chapters what can be done in a situation like this.

There are many criteria and no single approach to order. There is no right or wrong. It is not static. After a merger or acquisition, and with every strategic shift, the criteria for order will alter. Our goal is to support clients to navigate in times of change with order as one measurement instrument. What is the official order, and what are the unwritten rules that are defining the real order? What are some of the restraining forces that inhibit the organization to achieve its purpose and performance targets? How can we make these transparent and engage the organization in redefining the right order?

The three principles discussed so far — Purpose; Connection & Inclusion; and Order & Occupying space — and the relationship between them, together

they form the essential structure of an organization. These factors are both the foundations and the building. But how do we breathe this structure to live?

#### **IV. EXCHANGE**

We can design the perfect skeleton, structure it and define the interconnections between all parts, but how do we inject life into it? What does it take to create energy, flow and vitality, so that all these elements are interacting in an upward spiral? The founding idea may have created that initial spark, but it is not necessarily an eternal Olympic flame.

The principle of Exchange explores this mechanism of movement and energy flow, by looking at the balance between giving and taking, between debit and credit, between what you owe the company and what they owe you in return. Balance needs to be looked at over a certain period of time, while it will not be in full equilibrium at every given moment, a lasting unbalance leads to unpredictable restoring dynamics. While striving for balance, we will have to accept and work with unbalance.

In a healthy exchange there is a constant movement. A company delivers products to its clients and gets paid in return. The founders or company owners are carrying the investment and the risk, they are

entitled to part of the profit in return; the employees they hire do not carry the same burden. Employees are signing a contract that grants them a salary and benefits in return for their skills, their time and their motivation. You can ask people to run the extra mile during peak load moments or in times of crisis, but at a certain point that needs to be compensated for, be it financially, or in terms of recognition or growth opportunities. This notion of exchange is what lies behind the expression “we have been milking the cow for too long.”

In an acquisition, the concept of exchange gets a bit more complicated. Using our metaphor of an arranged marriage, the buyer pays a significant amount of money to acquire the company name, its brands, the network of assets, its client relationship, the access to new territories and markets and every individual that was contracted. For the employees, however, the acquisition often feels forced, and seems a hostile take-over. The contract signature on the highest level, does not guarantee employees are as excited or willing to exchange their experience, knowledge, skill sets or their motivation and loyalty for the new compensation and benefits. It’s only at the highest levels that “What is in it for me” is close to

“What is in it for the whole system.” Many employees experience a loss at first, and might therefore not be open to discover what the new exchange could look like, and what additional opportunities for learning and growth there are to be found in forming a new system.

Part of our intervention in the early phase of an integration is to help people to see the chances and possibilities to influence the new identity in this formative phase, where many elements are still fluid. We also support them to name what is really lost or will not come back, or at least not soon. Research has demonstrated that there is only a limited window to get the new narrative right and to engage the organization in it.

\*\*\*

In reviewing the key characteristics of systemic intelligence and the critical competencies to be able to navigate in complexity, we have walked through the four core principles of systemic intelligence. These are the navigational instruments essential to tackle systemic issues and restore an organization to health and flow.

*Adapted from Chapter IV "Looking at All Parties with Systemic Intelligence" from our forthcoming book. ■*



**PAUL ZONNEVELD** Paul has more than 15 years of experience in applying systemic thinking to family and organizational constellations and over 25 years of international business experience. He is an executive coach and a senior member of the transformational faculty with Mobius Executive Leadership. He is the program director and lead trainer for Systemic Coaching and Systemic Intelligence, using organizational complexity and constellation work at various training institutes in Europe. He brings together thought leaders in this field of work and, along with an international group of experts, is pioneering work on trauma in organizations.



**MIEKE JACOBS** Mieke has 20 years of global manufacturing and industry experience and has been consulting multinational corporations and executive teams in all major industries. She has a passion for people and organizational dynamics, and has acquired additional skills and certifications in the area of Neuro Linguistic Programming, Personal Mastery, Coaching, Systems Thinking, Constellation Work, Neuroscience and Affective Psychology, Somatics and Trauma Therapy and applies these insights and methodologies in her facilitation and transformation work with leaders, teams and organizations. She is a thought leader, a poet and a writer and authored several articles and her first book. She is a passionate keynote speaker and group facilitator in conferences across the globe. Mieke is a Mobius transformational faculty member and executive coach.

# The Larger Self: How to cultivate our wisest self under pressure

By Mobius Senior Expert, Dr. Richard Schwartz, Ph.D.



The Internal Family Systems (IFS) model was developed over twenty years ago by therapist, trauma expert, systems thinker and co-author of the most widely used family therapy textbook in the United States, Dr. Dick Schwartz. If you haven't heard of IFS, you have certainly come across phrases the model has made mainstream. IFS gave us a radical new way to understand "the self," shedding light on the way different parts of our selves have different functions. Seemingly illogical behavior can be explained once we understand the role of the "inner critic" or our "firefighters" and "exiles."

In this essay, adapted for the *Mobius Strip*, Dick discusses the Larger Self, a fundamental aspect of the systems model he has developed and a vital tool to grasp in cultivating our wisest self. While IFS was designed for use among therapists and their patients, the IFS model has broad application in both self-development work and in our work as coaches and leadership practitioners. Understanding how to develop and access this Larger Self (especially when triggered by clients or others), is one of the most profound ways in which we can best serve ourselves, our clients and the need to bring positive change to the world.

For more on the evolution of this model and working with difficult parts, see Dick's companion article in last year's *Mobius Strip*: "Evolution of The Internal Family Systems Model." We are honored Dick Schwartz joins the 2018 Next Practice Institute to lead a week-long immersive track.

We all know about those luminous moments of clarity and balance, in our own lives and in those of our clients, which come briefly now and again. However we get there, we suddenly encounter a feeling of inner plenitude and open heartedness to the world that wasn't there the moment before. The incessant nasty chatter inside our heads ceases, we have a sense of calm spaciousness, as if our minds and hearts and souls had expanded and brightened. Sometimes, these evanescent experiences come in a bright glow of

peaceful certainty that everything in the universe is truly okay, and that includes us – you and me individually – in all our struggling, imperfect humanity. At other times, we may experience a wave of joyful connection with others that washes away irritation, distrust, and boredom. We feel that, for once, we truly are ourselves, our *real selves*, free of the inner cacophony that usually assaults us.

For much of my life, the closest I'd come to actually experiencing this kind of blissful oneness

was on the basketball court. Over the years I'd become addicted to basketball — to the fleeting moments when I entered into a state in which my inner critics disappeared and my body seemed to know just what to do. I had total confidence in my abilities and experienced a sense of joy and awe at being spontaneously in the moment.

When I became a family therapist, I longed to experience something similar in sessions with my clients. Instead my work seemed hard, frustrating, and draining. I believed that it was up to me to restructure families — to use the force of my personality to pry apart enmeshed relationships and open up blocked communication patterns. I thought I needed to change clients by applying my intellect and will. I had to come up with reframes for their symptoms, solutions to their problems, and new perspectives on their dilemmas. I just had to find a way to motivate them to do the homework I gave them, and to not feel totally frustrated when they didn't. All this responsibility for creating change, and doing it quickly, not only precluded any peak experiences in my work, it was burning me out.

Then in the early 1980's, I began noticing that several clients with eating disorders described extensive internal conversations with what they called different parts of themselves. When I asked about what happened inside them to make them binge and purge, they referred to "this part of me" or "that part of me." I was intrigued. I had one client, Diane, ask the pessimistic voice she was describing why it always told her she was hopeless. The voice responded that it was hopeless so that Diane wouldn't take any risks and get hurt; it was trying to protect her. This seemed like a promising interaction. If this pessimist really had benign intent, then Diane might be able to negotiate a different role for it. But Diane wasn't interested in negotiating. She was angry at this voice and kept

telling it to just leave her alone. I asked her why she was so rude to the pessimist and she went on a long diatribe, describing how that voice had made every step she took in life a major hurdle.

It occurred to me that I wasn't talking to Diane, but to another part of her that constantly fought with the pessimist. In an earlier conversation, Diane had told me about an ongoing war inside her between one voice that pushed her to achieve and the pessimist who told her it was hopeless. Could it be that the pushing part had jumped in while Diane was talking to the pessimist?

I asked Diane to focus on the voice that was so angry at the pessimist and ask it to stop interfering in her negotiations with the pessimist. To my amazement, it agreed to "step back," and Diane immediately shifted out of the anger she'd felt so strongly seconds before. When I asked Diane how she felt toward the pessimist now, it seemed like a different person answered. In a calm, caring voice, she said she was grateful to it for trying to protect her and felt sorry that it had to work so

hard. Her face and posture had also changed, reflecting the soft compassion in her voice. From that point on, negotiations with the inner pessimist were easy.

I tried this "step back" procedure with several other clients. Sometimes we had to ask two or three voices not to interfere before the client shifted into a state similar to Diane's, but we got there nonetheless. When they were in that calm, compassionate state, I'd ask these clients what voice or part was present. They each gave a variation of the following reply: "that's not a *part* like those other voices are. That's more of who I really am. That's my Self."

Devoting the ensuing two decades to refining methods for helping clients to release this state and to get in this state myself, I've found that the most important variable in how quickly clients can access their Selves is the degree to which I — as their

**The most important variable in how quickly clients can access their Larger Selves is the degree to which I — as their therapist — am Self-led.**



therapist – am Self-led. When I can be deeply present to my clients from the core of my being, free from anxiety about how I’m doing, or who’s in control of the therapy, or whether the client is following the correct therapeutic agenda, clients respond as if the resonance of my Self were a tuning fork that awakens their own. It’s this deep, true, and faithful presence of the therapist – without portfolio or baggage – that every client yearns to connect with.

### **The Self in the Consulting Room**

I’m meeting for the first time with an anorexic client, Margie, in a residential treatment center where I’m a consultant. She’s fought with her anorexia for 19 years, and has found that whenever she starts feeling better about herself, she stops eating. Before the session, I focus on my internal world – to center myself. I hear a familiar voice of fear saying that she’s obviously very fragile and I shouldn’t do anything to upset her. I tell that part of me that I’ll be sensitive to her condition, and ask that it trust me and let my heart open again. I focus on my heart and sense the protective crust that had enveloped it melt away. I can feel more sensation now in my chest and abdomen, with a vibrating energy running through my limbs. I feel calm and confident as Margie enters the office and sits down.

She looks like a cadaver and has a feeding tube in her nose. Her movements are controlled and rigid. She eyes me warily. At once, I feel great compassion for her and respect for the parts of her that don’t trust me. And may not want to work with me. I’m not

invested in a certain outcome for this session. I’d like to help her, but I’ll be fine if she chooses not to let me in. I’m curious about what her anorexia has been up to all these years, yet I am certain that it has good reasons for doing this to her. I feel the energy in my body extending nonverbally through my heart toward her, and trust that at some level she can sense it. I’m confident that, if I can remain in this state, whatever is supposed to happen will. I don’t have to make anything happen.

I introduce myself and tell her that I’m good at helping people with the parts of them that make them not eat. I ask Margie where she finds that voice of anorexia in her body and how she feels toward it. She closes her eyes and says it’s in her stomach, and she’s angry at it. She says that it tells her that it’s going to kill her and that there’s nothing she can do about it. I feel a jolt of fear clenching my gut and hear a familiar inner voice saying, “it’s determined to kill her and succeeding. What if you say something that makes it even more determined!” Again, I quickly reassure my fear with words like, “Trust me. Remember that if I stay present something good always happens.” My abdomen immediately relaxes and the soft, flowing energy returns to my body.

In a calm, confident voice I tell Margie, “It makes sense that you’re angry with the eating disorder part, because its avowed purpose is to screw up your life or even kill you. But right now, we just want to get to know it a little better, and it’s hard to do that when you’re so angry with it. We’re not going to



give it more power by doing that – just get to know more about why it wants to kill you. So see if the part of you that’s so angry with it is willing to trust you and me for a few minutes. See if it’s willing to relax, to maybe watch as we try to get to know the eating disorder part.” She says okay and when I ask how she feels toward the eating disorder now, she says she’s tired of battling with it. I have her ask that part to relax and step back too, and then another part that was very confused by the disorder. Remarkably for someone in her condition, each time she asks a part to step back, it does. Finally, in response to my question of “how do you feel toward the eating disorder now?” she says in a compassionate voice, “Like, I want to help it.”

The moment in a session when a client suddenly has access to some degree of Self always gives me goose bumps. Up until then I’d had to repeatedly reassure my fear and my own inner pessimist, who, as each new part of Margie’s took over, was sure I could never get access to the Self of someone who was so emaciated and symptomatic. At the point when her own compassionate Self emerged, all my parts could relax and step back because they knew from experience that the rest of the session would go smoothly.

### **From Dread to “in flow”**

How did I go from often dreading doing therapy, hoping clients would cancel, and feeling chronically depleted, to enjoying therapy as a spiritual practice

filled with experiences of connection and awe-inspiring beauty? How did I come to be as refreshed after an intense therapy session as if I’d been meditating for an hour? How did doing therapy come to replace playing basketball as my greatest source of that flow feeling?

The short answer is that over the years, I’ve come to trust the healing power of what I’ll call the Self in clients and in myself. When there’s a critical mass of Self in a therapy office, healing just happens. When I’m able to embody a lot of Self, as was the case with Margie, clients can sense in my voice, eyes, movements, and overall presence that I care a great deal about them, know what I’m doing, won’t be judging them, and love working with them. Consequently, their inner protectors relax, which releases more room for their Self to emerge. They then begin to relate to themselves with far more curiosity, confidence, and compassion.

As clients embody more Self, their inner dialogues change spontaneously. They stop berating themselves and instead, get to know, rather than try to eliminate, the extreme inner voices or emotions that have plagued them. At those times they tell me, they feel “lighter,” their minds feel somehow more “open” and “free.” Even clients who’ve shown little insight into their problems are suddenly able to trace the trajectory of their own feelings and emotional histories with startling clarity and understanding.

What’s particularly impressed me in those moments isn’t only that my clients, once they’ve discovered the

Self at the core of their being, show characteristics of insight, self-understanding and acceptance, stability and personal growth, but that even disturbed clients, who'd seem to be unlikely candidates for such shifts, so often experience the same.

The accepted wisdom in the field during my training was that clients with truly terrible childhoods – relentless abuse and neglect – resulting in flagrant symptoms, needed a therapist to construct functioning egos for them, virtually from scratch. They simply didn't have the psychological wherewithal to do the job themselves. But even those clients, once they experienced a sense of their own core, began to take over and acquire real ego strength on their own, without my having to shovel it into them. And yet, almost no Western psychological theories could explain from where this newfound and quite amazing ability to contain and understand their inner turmoil had come.

The more this happened, the more I felt confronted by what were in essence spiritual questions that simply couldn't be addressed in the terms of problem solving, symptom-focused, results-oriented, clinical technique. I began my own novice's exploration into the literature of spirituality and religion and discovered a mother lode of esoteric writings by sages, holy seekers, wise men and women, all of whom emphasized meditative and contemplative techniques as a means of coming to know their Self.

I have also found, however, that the most important variable in how quickly clients can access their Self is the degree to which I am fully present and Self-led. It's this presence that constitutes the healing element in psychotherapy regardless of the method or philosophy of the practitioner.

### **Obstacles to Self-Leadership**

Yet being Self-led with clients isn't easy. There are so many ideas we're taught about clients and about doing

therapy that fuel our fears and keep us distant. The DSM-IV keeps our focus on our client's scariest and most pathological aspects. Our training encourages us to constantly monitor ourselves to avoid doing anything unprofessional, such as letting clients know how we feel about them or what our life is like. We stay on guard to ensure that clients don't violate our clinical boundaries or peek behind our professional masks.

In addition to the way we learn to view and relate to clients, we also bring lots of personal baggage into our offices that's easily triggered by their stories or behavior and is another source of disconnection. We have to deal

with these in order to work from Self. For example, in the early years of my work with sexual abuse survivors, I'd encourage them to embrace the terrified, young parts of them that were stuck in the time during the abuse. As my clients emotionally described the horrific scenes they were witnessing, I'd listen for a while, but then find myself distracted by daydreams or thoughts about what I needed to do that evening. Since they were so absorbed in their inner worlds, I assumed that

it didn't matter much if I checked in and out during that work, despite the occasional complaint from one of them that I didn't seem to be totally present.

Only when a compelling personal crisis drove me into therapy and I spent a year and a half in my therapist's office, crying much of the time, did I finally get to know the sad, humiliated, and terrified young parts of me that I'd spent my life trying to keep buried. As I helped those vulnerable boys, my exiled parts, the voices that protected them also quieted down. The arrogant intellectual, the angry rebel, the driven careerist, even the contemptuous and harping self critics telling me how inadequate I was, all of them found new roles.

After that, I found that I could stay with my clients even when they're in intense pain, because

**“ Though it seems it seems counterintuitive, there's great relief for therapists in the process of helping clients befriend rather than berate their inner tormentors.”**

I'm no longer afraid of my own. If I notice myself beginning to drift off, I can remind the "distracter" that I no longer need it to help me that way, and I'll immediately snap back. These days, my clients take more risks, entering the inner caves and abysses they used to circle around, because they sense that I'll be with them through the whole journey. And staying with them provides continued opportunities to visit and embrace again the vulnerability they stir in me, affording me a full appreciation of their courage, along with their terror and shame. Increasingly, I find tears of compassion and then joy flooding my eyes in the middle of sessions, and I'm less afraid to let clients see those tears and know how much I care.

Of course, none of this is as simple as I'm making it sound. It's an open secret, known to any halfway honest therapist, that our clients stir up in us as many unruly feelings, thoughts, prejudices, negative associations, and untoward impulses as we stir up in them. Not only are we as susceptible to the crosscurrents of contagious emotions typical of almost any human interaction, as anybody is, we have certain vulnerabilities unique to our

field. For one thing, we're supposed to be perfect – in session at least – mature, selfless, perceptive, calm, lucid, kind, hopeful, and wise no matter how nasty, hostile, self-centered, unreasonable, childish, despairing, and uncooperative our clients are.

So, for example, I'm sitting with a client, who's complaining (as she frequently does) in a high-pitched, whiny voice about how hard her life is. I feel a sharp stab of annoyance. She's very rich, has numerous servants, and spends much of her time shopping and attending to her elaborate social life. Today, she's unhappy with the antique vase in her living room which she just spent \$20,000 on. I, on the other hand, am a poor, hard-working therapist, who has to

put in killer weeks to make sure my kids have their college tuition. Somewhere inside I know that she was neglected and ignored as a child, and that part of her is still that lonely little girl crying for someone to pay attention. But right now, I have the urge to scream at her to shut up and quit whining. How do I reclaim my inner balance when this mean, little voice of righteous indignation so powerfully insinuates itself into my consciousness?

With all the intense provocations to which we're subjected day in and day out, we need to find a way to keep ourselves firmly grounded and openhearted and

not be tossed about by our own reactive emotions. We have to be able to tap into something at the very core of our being that provides a deep keel for our sailboat in the storm, so we can ride the roiling waves without being submerged by them. We can't become centered in what I call the Self – the deep ground of our being – by trying to flatten, suppress, deny, or destroy the feelings we don't like in ourselves or others.

To experience the Self, there's no shortcut around our inner barbarians – those unwelcome parts of ourselves, such as hatred, rage, suicidal despair, fear, addictive need (for drugs, food, sex), racism and other prejudice, greed, as well as the somewhat less heinous feelings of ennui, guilt, depression, anxiety, self-righteousness, and self-loathing. The lesson I've repeatedly learned over the years of practice is that we must learn to listen to and ultimately embrace these unwelcome parts. If we can do that, rather than trying to exile them, these aspects transform. And, though it seems counterintuitive, there's great relief for therapists in the process of helping clients befriend rather than berate their inner tormentors. I've discovered, after painful trial and much error at my clients' expense, that treating their symptoms and





**“In this age of highly technical therapies, manualized methodologies, and pharmaceutical propaganda, it’s hard to remember the healing potential of your openhearted presence.”**

difficulties like varieties of emotional garbage to be eliminated from their systems simply doesn’t work well. Often, the more I’ve joined clients in trying to get rid of their destructive rage and suicidal impulses, the more powerful and resistant these feelings have grown – though they’ve sometimes gone underground to surface at another time, in another way.

In contrast, these same destructive or shameful parts responded far more positively and became less troublesome, when I began treating them as if they had a life of their own, as if they were in effect, real personalities in themselves, with a point of view and a reason for acting as they did. Only when I could approach them in a spirit of humility and a friendly desire to understand them could I begin to understand why they were causing my clients so much trouble. I discovered that if I can help people approach their own worst, most hated feelings and desires with open minds and hearts, these retrograde emotions will be found not only to make sense and have a legitimate purpose in the person’s psychological economy, but also, quite spontaneously, to become more benign.

As I help clients begin inner dialogues with the parts of themselves holding horrible, antisocial feelings and get to know why these internal selves express such fury or self-defeating violence, these parts calm down, grow softer, and even show that they also contain something of value. I’ve found, during this work, that there are no purely “bad” aspects of any person. Even the worst impulses and feelings – the urge to drink, the compulsion to cut oneself, the paranoid suspicions, the murderous fantasies – spring from parts of a person that themselves have a story to tell and the capacity to become something positive and helpful to the client’s life. The point of therapy isn’t to get rid of anything, but to help it transform.

As I discovered the nature of the extreme parts of my clients and increasingly was able to trust their healing Self, I became liberated. I no longer had to come up with the answers for people or wrestle with their impulses. It was like I’d been the engine of a powerboat straining to push therapy through dark storms and over big waves and then, suddenly, I could climb inside, put up a sail, and let a wise and gentle wind carry my clients and me to destinations

I couldn't have predicted. At first, it was hard to give up the sense of control over what would happen and what goals would be achieved in sessions. But now I love the adventure of it all. It's easy to go with the flow when you really trust the flow.

Once that boulder of responsibility was lifted off my shoulders, I found that I could breathe again. Being able to drop my guard, as well as my inner diagnoses, strategies, pushers, and motivators, I could enjoy being the person I am. Ironically, clients enjoy me more, and resist me less when I'm in this way — sensing my authenticity and lack of agenda. Clients come to love the Self-to-Self connection they feel when I'm really present.

But it's hard to maintain that kind of presence. In addition to the parts that your clients trigger, your outside life has a way of doing that, too. The painstaking work of developmental researcher John Gottman has shown that it's the capacity to repair the inevitable ruptures with those we love that constitutes successful intimacy and relationship. The same is true in our relationship with our clients. Therapy is virtually never a lovely, unbroken pas de deux between therapist and client. More often it's a series of minor fender benders and close calls, punctuated by the occasional bad wreck. Clinical work progresses via ruptures — misunderstandings, confusion, subtle conflicts, power plays, and disappointments within and between client and therapist — which are then repaired. And it's through this process of rupture and repair that therapeutic advances are made.

But therapists sometimes forget that it isn't only the client who misunderstands and reacts. Those of us who use this therapeutic approach have an axiom: whenever there's a problem in the therapy a part is interfering, but you don't know whose it is. Sometimes it's a wayward angry, scared, or deluded aspect of the client that's been triggered. But it's equally likely that a protector of the therapist has taken over without his or her awareness, and that the client is reacting to the breach in their connection.

### **The Healing Self in Action**

How can we, with all the intense provocations to which we're subjected day in and day out, keep ourselves firmly grounded and openhearted? To do

this, we have to be able to tap into something at the core of our being.

I meet Marina, a sexual abuse survivor, at the door for her regular session, and I know instantly that she's really furious with me. "You were completely spaced out with me during the last session — not present at all," she hurls at me, before going into a tirade about how cruel I was to lure her into a vulnerable emotional state and then abandon her. "You're heartless!" she spits out in summation.

Being faced with an enraged woman, particularly one who's angry with me has always aroused a cacophony of alarm bells in my head and sent electric shocks through my body. In the moment, I nod sagely, trying to look calm and stalling for time, until I can breathe again and marshal a response. One inner voice instantly bursts forth with, "Well, abuse survivors always blame their therapists sooner or later. This is all just projection — you've finally become her perpetrator!" Another irate member of my internal family chimes in, "What an ingrate she is! You've cut your fee for her and see her at odd hours, and look how she treats you!" An inner hysteric begins shouting, "Oh, my God, she's a borderline who'll ruin your career! Danger! Danger!" Then my various inner critics weigh in with their take on the subject: "Well, she's probably right. You probably did zone out on her. Why can't you really be there for your clients? What kind of therapist are you, anyway? Maybe you should go into some other line of work."

Years ago, one of those parts would have taken over and I would have gone into heavy-duty defensive mode — minimizing her feelings, taking a condescending tone of clinical wisdom to subtly let her know that she must be mistaken. Or I might have apologized but not in a heartfelt way, which would just have fueled her rage. Or I might have become one of my inner critics and begun overzealous mea culpa, apologizing effusively, letting her know that what I did was unforgivable.

But now, I can quiet these inner parts, asking them to step back and just let me listen to what she's saying. Whereas before I'd feel spacey, out of control, as if various aspects of Dick Schwartz were being catapulted from one side of the room to the other, now I remain deeply and solidly in my body — literally, embodied. I

suddenly feel myself spontaneously shifting out of that frozen place, relaxing, and opening myself up to her. I'm able to sense the pain behind her words, so I don't have to meet the attack itself head on, or mollify it.

Instead, because I can see the little hurt child in there, I can talk to that child from my heart, convey my sincere regret for the pain she feels. "I can see something happened in the way I was with you last time that made you feel bad," I say. "I don't remember what happened, but I can see it felt very hurtful and I'm sorry. I know I do have a tendency to drift off occasionally, but I'll keep a closer eye on it and take it more seriously." She calms down immediately because she knows I'm not trying to correct her, placate her, change her mind, or get her to see things my way. The entire conversation shifts to another level, because she feels truly heard and seen. A repair is made and we have the opportunity to work with the parts that felt so angry and hurt by me.

I'm usually able to quickly calm those protectors of mine not just because this technique of asking them to step back is so effective, but also because I've done other work to get my inner parts to respond to my requests. I've become less affected by the rage of others because I've spent time holding and healing some of the young, vulnerable, childlike parts of myself that used to become so terrorized by people's angry eruptions. Since I'm less easily hurt, my inner defenders and critics have less to protect. I've also had lots of practice demonstrating to those protective parts how much better things go when they let me – my Larger Self – lead.

I've tried to let my most disturbing clients become my best teachers. They're my tormentors. By tormenting they mentor me because they trigger key wounds and defenses that I need to heal. Also, they present ample opportunities for me to see what happens when I don't take the bait and, instead, remain Self-led. In this age of highly technical therapies, manualized methodologies, pharmaceutical propaganda, and, of course, the managed-care-generated atmosphere of therapy-lite, it's hard to remember the healing potential of your openhearted presence. And yet, patiently being with clients from the deepest core of ourselves is the most important resource we have to offer. I've learned that if I fully trust the power of my Self, I can also trust

the power of my client's Self. If I can show up with confidence, and compassion, and curiosity, my client, eventually, will show up, too, and we can spend much of our time together with a river of energy flowing between us. When that happens, we both heal.

Once you've attuned with your client, the session begins to flow, and there's an almost effortless quality to the work, as if something magical were unfolding almost by itself. I don't even think about what I'm going to say – the right words just come out, as if something were speaking through me. Afterward, I'm full of energy, as if I'd been meditating for an hour rather than doing hard, demanding, clinical work. In a sense, of course, I've been in a state of meditation – a state of deep mindfulness, full-bodied attention, centered awareness, and inner calm. And even after all these years, I still have the sense of being witness to something awe inspiring, as if the client and I both were connected to something beyond us, much bigger than we are. ■

---

*Note:* Some, but not all IFS techniques apply in a coaching context, such as: introducing the concept of parts and how parts have roles; asking "protector parts" such as the inner critic to step back; helping your client access their Larger Self in approaching deeply entrenched patterns. There are, however, elements of IFS not appropriate for coaches who are not trained psychotherapists, such as dealing with trauma and working with vulnerable/exiled parts.

---



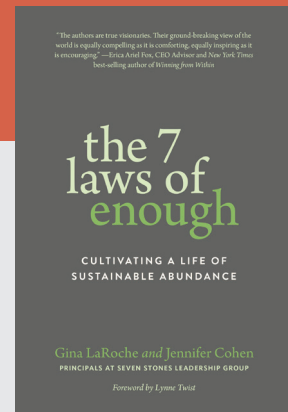
**DR. RICHARD SCHWARTZ**

is a Mobius Senior Expert. He earned his Ph.D. in Marriage and Family Therapy from Purdue University, after which he began a long association with the Institute for Juvenile Research at the University

of Illinois at Chicago, and more recently at The Family Institute at Northwestern University, attaining the status of Associate Professor at both institutions. He is co-author, with Michael Nichols, of *Family Therapy: Concepts and Methods*, the most widely used family therapy text in the United States.

# 7 Laws of Enough: Cultivating a Life of Sustainable Abundance

A book excerpt by Mobius Transformational Faculty member Jennifer Cohen and Mobius Coach Gina LaRoche



**FOREWORD** *The Seven Laws of Enough* invites you to explore the nourishing wellspring of enough. By connecting us to the taproot of sustainable abundance, Gina LaRoche and Jennifer Cohen offer each of us the opportunity to feel strong, whole, blessed, at ease, and able to rest in the profound fullness of life itself.

This book is a powerful pathway to the life we all dream of.

In order to find our way to this blissful outcome, Gina and Jennifer first wisely plunge us into awareness of the “myths of scarcity,” a set of unconscious, unexamined assumptions that govern our lives without us even knowing it. They show us how we live in a consumer society that promotes the cultural conditioning and pervasive mind-set of “scarcity.” This mind-set makes us believe that we are unworthy or “less than” until we acquire more of anything and everything. We find ourselves lost in the treacherous terrain of scarcity, constantly vying for more but never feeling that more is the “enough” we are hoping for.

All the while, the source of “enough” or “sufficiency” and a life of sustainable abundance is within our grasp — waiting patiently for our attention.

Delving in to a body of distinctions created by my own mentor, Buckminster Fuller, years ago, and developed and practiced powerfully by the Hunger Project, *The Seven Laws of Enough* lays out practices that help us orient, anchor, and find ourselves living and expressing true sufficiency, the exquisite experience of being and having enough.

Allow the message of this book to bless your life and liberate you from the tyranny of not enough time, not enough money, not enough love, not enough sleep, and the feeling of not “being” enough.

The thoughtful practices in this book will help you see how true abundance flows from enough, never from more. Follow the sound and sage words that follow and your life can be an expression of contentment, gratitude, light, and love.

Lynne Twist, author of *The Soul of Money*

## INTRODUCTION

### A Radical Decluttering

You are in *The Matrix*. You are offered a blue pill and a red pill. The first lets you continue on in your life as is. The second promises access to the truth about existence, the whole unadulterated truth. Which do you choose? In the Matrix version, the truth turns out to be that we humans are grown and harvested to feed energy to the dominating machines.

Knowing this, we probably want that blue pill. But, what if the truth is the opposite of such a sour reality? What if the truth is that everything is OK? Like, Garden of Eden OK?

It's hard to imagine. But it is the truth of sufficiency. Here are the facts: there is enough food, air, water, and other necessities for every human being on the planet to live a quality life, full of resources and abundance. In 1970, Buckminster Fuller, the architect and futurist, predicted that it would take us fifty years to see this. And, now, almost exactly fifty years later, we still haven't accepted this. Nor have we begun to organize ourselves to reflect the fact that there is enough. We believe it's time to go public with this message and to share the truth.

Here is this book in a nutshell: You are enough. You do enough. You have enough, already. If you were to orient to life, to your team, your family, and society as if that were true, we guarantee you would see life in a whole new way. You would ask different questions and frame problems differently. New solutions would emerge.

Our "modern" society is already scaring the pants off of us and making us feel bad for who we are and what we do or don't have. But fear and shame aren't conducive to positive change. To help counteract them, we'll paint a picture of what is already available to us. Let us peel back the layers of distortion we have grown up and been trained in and bask in the bounty available to us.

We call this bounty "sustainable abundance." Sustainable: ethical, reciprocal, just. Abundance: grateful, radiant, and present to the bounty everywhere.

As we have reflected on our own paths to living lives of sustainable abundance, we have developed a framework that we call the "Seven Laws of Enough," which offers a map of the territory ahead.

**LAW 1: Stories Matter.** We are living in a web of stories, most of them not of our own making. We'll help you go from being stuck in your inherited stories to being the author of stories that further your life's purpose.

**LAW 2: I Am Enough.** You are. I am. We are. When we stop questioning our birthright everything shifts.

**LAW 3: I Belong.** Everyone does. No one has the right to tell us otherwise. We live in a culture that teaches us we're separate and has a vested interest in making us feel as if we don't belong.

**“Stories hold such a powerful place in the brain that it does not often register anything outside the story line. The brain is designed to look for evidence to support the stories we think are true. This means stories filter our world, shaping the landscape we see and all that we miss.”**

**LAW 4: No One Is Exempt.** We're set free when we accept impermanence and face what is finite and infinite. This helps us see through the lies of scarcity.

**LAW 5: Resting Is Required.** Society encourages us to be overworked, overmedicated, overfed, undernourished, and terrified. We crave the kind of deep rest we have almost lost. We can and must reclaim it.

**LAW 6: Joy Is Available.** We can find deep and abiding joy when we see clearly, let go of the lies, and notice what we have already.

**LAW 7: Love Is the Answer.** This is the final law and our deepest truth. Love is the answer to the questions that plague our society and close our hearts.

Our aim for you is pure and simple: guiding you to a way of being in your life so you feel powerful, at ease, able to rest in life itself. When you are done reading, we hope you will know what is enough for you.

In each chapter, we will give you an opportunity to learn a new practice, to unwind from habits that no longer serve you, and connect you directly to the well of enough that's waiting for each of us.

But reading isn't enough. You must make an everyday practice of being who you wish to be, and living how you wish to live. It requires that you continually unlearn bad habits from a culture of

scarcity, and persistently engage in learning new ones. This is the gym of your life. We invite you to a lifetime membership.

### **Our First Workout**

So here is our first practice. Gratitude, or thankfulness, provides us with an immediate and direct experience of sustainable abundance. Let's begin.

Take a deep breath and grab a pen and paper if you like. List seven things for which you are grateful in your life right now. If seven is easy, go for fourteen. If fourteen is easy, go for twenty-one. Now for a stretch: think of someone or something you don't currently feel gratitude for. Bring to mind the person or situation. Breathe and see if you can find any gratitude at all for the people or situation involved.

### **TAKING THE SCARE OUT OF SCARCITY**

We have the power to take the "scare" out of "scarcity." We can stop buying into the myths and lies of our time. "Not enough" and "too much" are just stories that people have created — stories we can change.

### **What Is "Enough"?**

Asking, "What is enough?" implies that you can answer the question for yourself. When you do, you've taken the first step on your own path — you can stop endlessly seeking more.



*Enough* is a declaration of something *beyond never enough*. *Enough* is a possibility. *Enough* is a truth. *Enough* is now. *Enough* already!

When we find ourselves dwelling in the past or worried about the future we are in a scarcity story. *Enough* is a gateway to a world where we can rest, recalibrate, and rewrite our lives.

There's not one single right definition of *enough*. It's about what's *enough* for you. Once you figure that out, you can wake up and choose your own life. Otherwise, you may end up drifting along in someone else's scarcity story. A story that's not yours can't be the source of your true happiness, or provide a path to a just and sustainable planet.

*Enough is not about dictating amounts or a particular lifestyle. It is a point of view, a context for the way we orient to ourselves, to one another, organizations, and life itself.*

The actions we choose to take will look different for each of us. For some of us this means getting rid of our clutter, giving away old clothes, downsizing our homes, emptying our storage units, and simplifying our lives.

### The Sounds of Scarcity

Let's put our thoughts and fears on loudspeaker for a moment. Stop and really listen to the clamor in your head and all around you. This is what we hear every day, all day: "If only I had more time... If I could just have a minute to myself... If only I could afford... If only I were thinner, smarter, faster, richer... then... then I'd be ok, feel better, do the things I really want to do...THEN, I'd be happy! But I'm so tired. *I need more sleep. More exercise. A better body. Plastic surgery. A nicer, sexier, richer mate. More closet space. New clothes. New phone. New car.*"

Or maybe the flip side:

*"I have too much to do. I am drowning. My house is a mess with clutter. I am so overwhelmed. I will never get it all done in time. If I only had one more day in the week or twenty-six hours in a day, then. . . ."*

On and on the story goes. We want more time, more space, more sex, more money, *always* more

money. No matter how much we have, there is never ever enough money.

*Sound familiar?*

Ever hear of the allegory about two fish friends swimming in the ocean? A third fish swims by, greets the friends, and says, "Nice water today." After a few moments one fish turns to his friend and says, "Water? What's water?"

This is our human situation. The water we swim in can be hard to notice. But once we do see it, we have the opportunity to choose something else. That is what happened to us. When we saw the scarcity, its pervasiveness and tenacity, we knew we wanted something different. We hope you will too.

We're stuck in the cycle of consumption. They get rich. You get tired. Their stock price goes up. Your energy drops. They own your mind. You own lots of stuff. You might periodically get the urge to sell it or put it in bags for Goodwill. Or, like so many others, you might keep accumulating and hoarding, letting it fill your houses to the point where nothing more fits. Now you must acquire more space and put stuff in storage because you can't imagine letting it go. You can't afford the stuff or the storage fees. You find yourself in debt, struggling and suffering, caught by an inability to let go, slow down, and stop.

But wait, there's more! Being a workaholic is now considered a badge of honor. We brag about how hard we work (at work, at the gym, as a parent . . .) to prove we are all right.

Whew. Exhausting.

We are playing a game of unlimited consumption that we can't win. We think we can win by outspending, outworking, and outtraveling "the Joneses." After all of our effort and striving, we still feel something is missing. Success, and its constant companion, the quest for more, leaves us tired and afraid.

Annie Leonard, creator of the film *The Story of Stuff*, speaks to our "more is better" lifestyle. She says, "[It] is not even making us happy along the way. It would be one thing if we were having a great time plundering our natural habitat and endlessly consuming. But we are the least happy, most overfed, and undernourished people in history."

### Three Levels of Scarcity

In our work we've found three levels of scarcity:

1. **Personal scarcity.** I am not enough. I am not smart enough, sexy enough, wise enough, fast enough, skinny enough, accomplished enough. You get the picture.
2. **Interpersonal scarcity.** You are not enough. And, "If you would just, [fill in the blank here with either something you want that person to start doing or stop doing], then it or you would be ok." This kind of scarcity is pervasive in intimate relationships and in our workplaces. "If they had been faster, smarter, more efficient, then we would not be in this pickle."
3. **Structural scarcity.** This scarcity is built into the system so that for some people, there is really and truly not enough.

All three of these levels of scarcity are operating at the same time. Those of us who have enough to fulfill our needs and some of our wants may live in constant fear that we could lose it all. So, we hold on tight to what we have, and focus on accumulating more so we are never in the position of those who do not have enough to pay the bills.

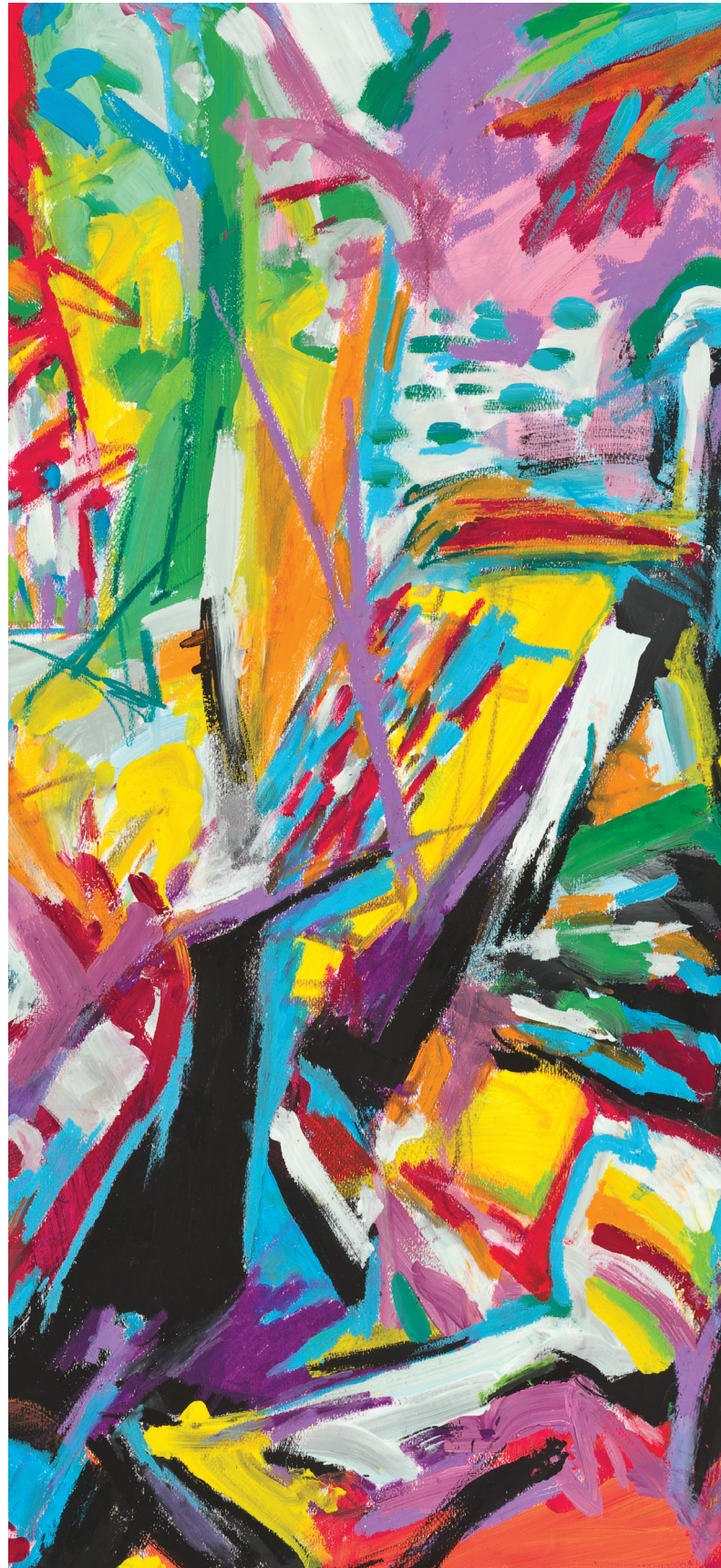
### HOW WE GOT HERE

#### A bit of biology

Our brains have evolved, in part, to search for danger. To do this successfully we instinctively sort for what is different, unusual, or not within the norm. As hunter-gatherers, danger took the shape of a tiger chasing us or another tribe at war with us. We had to constantly search for food and water resources, sometimes requiring a tribe or community to pack up and move elsewhere.

Today, those "tigers" can look like our bosses at work, our competitors who have more resources than we do, and people trying to get ahead of us literally or figuratively.

Beyond that thrust for survival is something else built into us: the capacity to dream, to long, to feel awe, to desire. We seek to reach, to go beyond where we are currently. Following these desires helps us identify, understand, locate, and own our power. By using our power effectively, we help take the scare out of scarcity.



**Society encourages us to be overworked, overmedicated, overfed, undernourished, and terrified. We crave the kind of deep rest we have almost lost. We can and must reclaim it.**

### **Human history and the birth of separation**

Human beings were initially nomadic and some still are. Hunting and gathering was the chief method for sustaining human life. We did not store much, if any, food for long periods.

Around ten thousand years ago, many human beings started to cultivate crops. This enabled us to stay in one place, settle and own land. With ownership came the need to defend the land and crops against those who might wish to take them. With agriculture came monarchies, with royalty came cities, and with cities and revolutions came centralized government. It was a steady march to the sea of scarcity from there.

### **Separating Ourselves**

As our physical biology changed, as well as the social structure of society, we began to see human life as separate from and dominant over all other life. We separated ourselves from nature. We separated mind from body, thinking from feeling. David Loy, a Buddhist teacher, says it well, “The delusive sense of a separate self inside will always be experienced as ungrounded and therefore insecure, so there is also going to be this sense that something is missing. I think that helps explain our obsession with things like money, fame, appearance, and so forth. Thanks to this gnawing sense of lack, we never feel rich enough, famous enough, or beautiful enough.”

*What choices would we make — and how would we conduct ourselves — if we knew we were all connected? If we remembered our actions matter, our lives matter, and our conduct affects all of life?*

This “myth of separation” is costing us in ways that are staggering to our health, our well-being,

our planet, and each other. War, human trafficking, genocide. Pollution, global warming, mass species extinction, all arise from a belief that we are separate and “better than.”

### **The Siren Song of Consumption**

Have you noticed how often people are referred to as “consumers”? We constantly hear references to consumer confidence, consumer spending, consumer trends, consumer price indexes, and consumer habits.

John Monczunski writes in *Notre Dame Magazine*, “Consuming has become our identity, and if we don’t do it at the appropriate time, to the appropriate (excessive) degree, something must be wrong.”

Our consumption-based society started with the Industrial Revolution and its legacy of production for the sake of profit. Excess manufacturing capacity after World War II and abundant natural resources made things more readily available. By the 1950s people were consuming more than they had done in Earth’s entire history.

Industry in a capitalistic economy invented the consumption cycle: extraction, production, distribution, consumption, and disposal. With planned obsolescence, businesses created disposable goods and then manufactured desire for the latest and greatest of everything.

We have witnessed the dramatic rise of brand names, and “logo branded” merchandise with the logo being the selling point. Now we associate our belonging to a class or tribe with the products we buy. We are literally buying our belonging and social status.

We fuel our consumption and unchecked growth with money we don’t have to buy things we probably don’t need.

### The System in Action

Let's talk about diamonds. In the 1930s, less than 10 percent of women received a diamond engagement ring. Today about 80 percent of women receive a diamond. During the past eighty years, the diamond industry manufactured a story of value, scarcity, and status. They've convinced us that buying a diamond ring is an essential step toward a life of true happiness. But the message is much more insidious: the bigger the diamond, the bigger your love. If your friend's diamond engagement ring is bigger, that surely means their fiancé loves them more than yours does. This is the weapon of comparison. Its goal is to drive you to buy something you don't need, something that won't make you happy, and put you in debt for no good reason.

Scarcity is also woven into how money is created and distributed. In the 2009 documentary *The Money Fix*, Belgian economist Bernard Lietaer discusses how scarcity lives in our banking system. Every dollar in our system is actually debt. Money is created when someone incurs a debt and uses the banks to finance that debt. The money is kept scarce by charging interest on it. There is always less money than is needed in the system to pay back the debt. We have created an inherent deficiency in the money supply.

### MYTHS OF SCARCITY AND EXCESS

Our fear of scarcity is so ingrained we start to believe "this is just the way it is." In *The Soul of Money: Transforming Your Relationship with Money and Life*, Lynne Twist writes, "It's not you and me. It's you or me, and if I have more access to resources and money and labor, I win and you lose." Twist calls this thinking a "myth" because of the power these assumptions have over us.

#### Lynne Twist's Three Toxic Myths of Scarcity

- 1) There is not enough.
- 2) More is better.
- 3) That's just the way it is.

#### Three Myths of Excess

In the scarcity story, we believe more of everything will cure what ails us. This comes from three additional myths we call the myths of excess:

- You can have it all (people make a pretense of it).
- Having it all will make you happy (Instagram lets us edit our lives and only show the good parts — real life can't compete).
- If you do not have it all or you aren't happy, then it's your fault.

These myths keep us in a cycle of consumption and confusion. Even those of us who are aware of the problem continue to struggle to get out from underneath the power of the myths. And while consuming is not wrong, we are grossly out of balance with the other activities of being human.

### THE LIES WE TELL OURSELVES

Have you ever heard yourself say, out loud or in your head: "When I lose those last five, ten, twenty-five pounds, then I will feel good"? "Once we buy the house, then . . ."? "Once I get a new job, then . . ."?

We often think that a specific change will be the thing that pushes us over the edge into happiness! We believe happiness is just a matter of "more." More money, things, experiences, relationships.

Yet, has this been true for you? Have you lost the weight, gotten the fancier job, gotten the "perfect" relationship and then found yourself in a lasting state of greater joy and sustainable peace?

Be careful here in answering this because many of us have become confused. We are talking about real abiding happiness and joy, not momentary pleasure or satisfaction (which, by the way, we aren't knocking). As author Oliver Burkeman cites, "What's promised by positive thinking and conventional self-help, which seems aimed more at an unbroken state of excitement" is a fallacy.

Advertisers *promise* that our Subaru will connect us to love, or our experiences at Zappos will deliver happiness. We hope and pray that if we spin our thoughts in a particular direction — control their flow and tone and content — we will arrive at a steady, optimal, happy state. In the myths of excess we believe that more things will make us happy. The truth is, once our basic needs are met and we have some extra for fun and security, most research says the further accumulation of stuff not only does not make us happy, it can have the opposite effect.

**IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT**

There is a false belief that we are all born on the same starting line and have an equal chance of winning the money game. If you miss out, so the thinking goes, you must be lazy, stupid, or both. Yet that's often not true. Companies downsize, jobs move or disappear. There are actual issues of racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination that can work against you.

We get depressed, addicted, hopeless, and angry. No matter our "intentions" and even our hard work, we can't guarantee success and wealth. You can do all the "right" things and still not get the results you want every time or in the time you thought you would. That's life.

But living and working from a scarcity mind-set doesn't work in the long term, and isn't necessary. You don't need to have it all — you need to find what makes you happy (easier said than done, but worth the effort).

In *The Soul of Money*, Twist recounts a story of meeting and listening to the renowned futurist and thinker Buckminster Fuller who predicted that the world would be making a shift from what he termed a "you or me" mind-set to a mind-set of "you and me."

That Fuller's predictions are starting to come true is evidenced by today's "sharing economy." We each don't have to own everything — we can share with others. Think of Lyft and Uber, Zipcar and car2go: they all let you share someone else's car. Airbnb, Couchsurfing, VRBO, and more: they let you share someone else's home.

Those car- and house-sharing models are the very definition of "you and me." We both win: the "consumers" win by getting what we need without having to make big investments. The "providers" win in getting help to pay for what they own. The sharing economy helps us see that there is enough, that more is not better, and "just the way it is," is old thinking.

**THE WEAPONS OF SCARCITY**

There are weapons being deployed to keep us under control. We call these the "weapons of scarcity." They play us, even when we think we're smart enough not to fall for them. Yet even the smartest of us fall

into these traps. We've alphabetized this list — but shame and fear tend to be the biggest weapons. Then each of us falls victim to a different weapon of choice depending on the circumstance.

<i>Alienation</i>	<i>Failure</i>	<i>Resistance</i>
<i>Comparison</i>	<b><i>Fear</i></b>	<i>Self-loathing</i>
<i>Competition</i>	<i>Hoarding</i>	<b><i>Shame</i></b>
<i>Contraction</i>	<i>Hostility</i>	<i>Silence</i>
<i>Discord</i>	<i>Immediate and</i>	<i>Silence</i>
<i>Distraction</i>	<i>short term</i>	<i>Uncertainty</i>
<i>Doubt</i>	<i>Impatience</i>	<i>What isn't</i>
<i>Either/Or</i>	<i>Jealousy</i>	<i>Worry</i>
	<i>Resentment</i>	

Each of us may find that one weapon is more often deployed against us — or even by us. We may notice that a few are operating at all times and have become personal weapons of mass destruction.

Resentment, for example, is a pervasive weapon of scarcity and we use it against others and ourselves. Once we get a sense of which weapons we most often employ we can begin to catch ourselves starting to wander into scarcity territory.

Comparison can be a potent weapon. We can struggle, always wondering if we measure up to expectations of parents, siblings, teachers, mentors, or colleagues. A friend of ours shared how the comparison weapon led her to a pair of earrings and an aha moment:

*I knew two women who traveled a lot on foreign vacations. They would go to Europe, the Caribbean, or Asia at least once a year, and sometimes twice. I so envied their ability to go on these trips, while I was home childrearing and working to feed my family. One year, they traveled to Hong Kong, and each returned with beautiful sapphire and diamond earrings. They took my breath away. I knew right then that I would be happy and all would be well if I had earrings like that. I expressed my delight with the jewelry, and they even encouraged me to buy a pair because they were so happy with their earrings.*

*I pestered my husband to buy me said earrings for Christmas that year. We went shopping for them together. When we walked into the jewelry store, I was thrilled. We asked to see earrings just like the ones that my friend had bought. Out they came on the tray and my heart sank. They were way beyond what we could*

*afford. However, by then I was hooked and knew that any sapphire earrings would make me happy. I had to have some. We picked out a tiny pair of stud earrings and brought them home.*

*When I wore them, I discovered that they did not indeed make me happy. In fact, they made me feel ridiculous. I've kept those earrings in my jewelry box for thirty years.*

*Whenever I see someone who has an expensive sparkly possession that creates a deep twinge of envy in me, I do two things: I compliment them on their beautiful possession; and I take out my sapphire stud earrings and remember that feeling of emptiness after I bought them. I am not against sparkly expensive things — however, I have learned the lesson that happiness is never born out of a feeling of envy of not having.*

So not only do we deploy these weapons toward ourselves and in our relationships, the marketing machine of our economy uses them as fuel to support our overconsumption and distorted relationship to true happiness.

### **ARE YOU STUCK IN THE SCARCITY STORY?**

One way to see this is to return to how we opened this chapter, to recall your first thoughts from this morning. Were they something like, “I didn't get

enough sleep,” or “I don't have enough time to...”? Did you grab your mobile phone to get started on work before your feet hit the floor?

Now reread the myths: You can have it all, having it all will make you happy, and if you do not have it all or you are not happy, it's your fault.

As you read through these cultural assumptions that we live with as if they were real, start noticing your thoughts, body sensations, and emotions.

---

*Just noticing how we react to scarcity stories can shift our relationship with them.*

---

If we can make it a practice to become aware of these myths at play in our own life and the lives of others, then we can start to unwind from the toxicity of living a life in scarcity. We invite you to drop your scarcity story and join us.

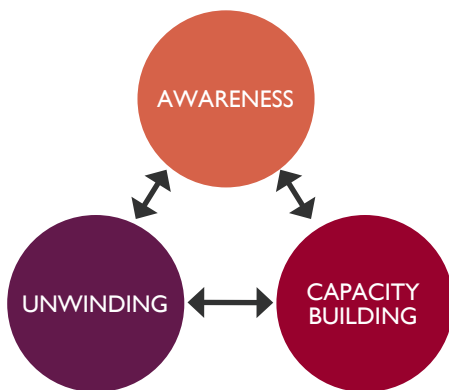
### **PRACTICE. PRACTICE. PRACTICE.**

The key to unwinding from scarcity is realizing that life is a learning journey. We learn through practice, and we have choices about what and how we practice.



### STRUCTURE SHAPES BEHAVIOR

When we practice, we get good at whatever it is we are practicing. This means we even get good at things we are doing unwittingly, or things that no longer serve us. There are three elements to breaking old habits and crafting new ones:



With **awareness** we begin by tracking the sensations we feel and the thoughts and images that arise in our day-to-day lives. We don't need to add to the experience; we can just witness and acknowledge what is happening. This gives us the ability to move through the world by choice rather than reaction and recrimination. We use both self-reflections and inquiry to increase awareness.

Typically, for **unwinding** to happen, we must interrupt our normal behaviors and habits and do something different and then watch and listen. We can engage with a safe person to help guide us. Sometimes we can do it on our own, but it requires safety and an opening to let what needs healing to come forward.

For **capacity building**, we deliberately repeat an action with commitment to strengthen what is there or fill in what is missing. Capacity building takes time. Dabbling with a practice once or twice will very likely not yield much for you. Patience, time, and repetition are required to produce lasting results.

These three elements combined support and interact with each other so we can develop new declarations, write new stories, and take new actions. Let us practice intentionally. Together. ■



**Gina Laroche** is Mobius Executive Coach and an organizational leadership consultant, facilitator and executive coach. She is a co-founder of Seven Stones Leadership Group with

Jennifer Cohen. Gina leverages 25 years of experience in delivering executive programs that have challenged leaders, teams and entrepreneurs to accelerate results using vision, strategy and accountability. Her current interest is working with leaders to develop mindfulness and presence for themselves and bringing these practices into organizations. She has spoken at Wisdom 2.0 Business conference and at the Mindful Leadership Summit. She is the co-author of *The Seven Laws of Enough* and author of *Living in Sufficiency: A Daily Journey and Unstuck: Make the Shift*.



**Jennifer Cohen** is a member of the Mobius Transformational Faculty and a founding member of its Global Coaching Practice. She is also the co-founder of Seven Stone Leadership Group,

a consulting consortium, where she teaches a unique model of leadership development and is pioneering work in moving organizations and individuals to a partnership model of living and leading. She is certified as a Master Coach by the Strozzi Institute for Learning. Jennifer co-authored *The Seven Laws of Enough*, a chapter in the text *Being Human at Work: Bringing Somatic Intelligence into Your Professional Life* and regularly contributes to the *Mobius Strip*. We are honored to have Jennifer as NPI Faculty since our inaugural Gathering.

## EXPLORING SCARCITY'S BIGGEST PAIN POINTS: MONEY, TIME, AND RELATIONSHIPS

Here are a series of practices to help you unwind from these pain points. Write your responses in your journal or notebook.

MONEY	TIME	RELATIONSHIPS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) What is my relationship with money?</li> <li>2) Who taught me about money and what did I learn?</li> <li>3) What does money mean to me? What is money? Where did it come from?</li> <li>4) What does money have to do with time?</li> <li>5) Where am I in scarcity about money? When did I first start to suffer in relationship to money and notice I had too little or too much?</li> <li>6) How do I want to relate to money now? Friend, enemy, sibling, lover?</li> <li>7) What secret about money am I willing to admit to myself, and to one other person?</li> <li>8) Am I willing to stop letting the amount of money I have or don't have define me?</li> <li>9) What story am I telling myself about money that is disempowering me? Am I willing to surrender this story?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) When did I become aware of time? How old was I?</li> <li>2) Who told me about time?</li> <li>3) Who do I know who "manages time" well?</li> <li>4) What are my strategies to manage time? What are my pain points?</li> <li>5) Where in my life does time speed up for me? Where does it slow down?</li> <li>6) What is my natural rhythm? When is my natural rhythm to work, to sleep, to clean, to make love?</li> <li>7) When did I notice giving up on that rhythm to fit into something?</li> <li>8) How have I adjusted to others' rhythms to stay connected or belong and what has the impact been?</li> <li>9) How is my relationship to time right now?</li> <li>10) What stories do I tell myself about time? (e.g., I don't have enough. I need five more hours in a day. I need another day in the week. If only I had more time, then [fill in the blank])</li> <li>11) If I look through the lens of the weapons of scarcity and connect them to time, what do I see? (e.g., obligation, comparison, what is not, discord, worry, impatience, contraction, immediate and short-term, resistance, either/or.)</li> <li>12) How would my life be if I knew I had all the time in the world? If I knew I actually had power in relationship to time? If I knew you could play with time?</li> </ol>	<p>Using a piece of paper, mark yourself the middle and write the names of the people who are in your life and put them at the distance they feel from you. Do this your way, with your chosen writing utensil. Don't overthink it, just sketch out: Who is in your life, and where do you place them? When you are complete, look at your relationship map and inquire:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Who is in my life? Who is missing?</li> <li>2) What kinds of relationships do I have? Friends, colleagues, lover(s), children, extended family, family of origin, neighbors, etc. How do I categorize or label those in my life?</li> <li>3) Where did I place them and why? What narratives do I have about the people in my life?</li> </ol> <p>Now that you have mapped out your relationships you may have noticed people whom you are "closer" to and "further" from. Notice how these distances are working for, or against you.</p> <p>Appreciate what's working. Consider how you can change what isn't.</p>

From *The 7 Laws of Enough* by Gina LaRoche and Jennifer Cohen

## Desiderata

Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible without surrender be on good terms with all persons.

Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even the dull and the ignorant; they too have their story. Avoid loud and aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain and bitter; for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself.

Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.

Exercise caution in your business affairs; for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals; and everywhere life is full of heroism. Be yourself. Especially, do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment it is as perennial as the grass.

Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be, and whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life keep peace with your soul. With all its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.

– Max Ehrmann

Desiderata, Copyright 1952



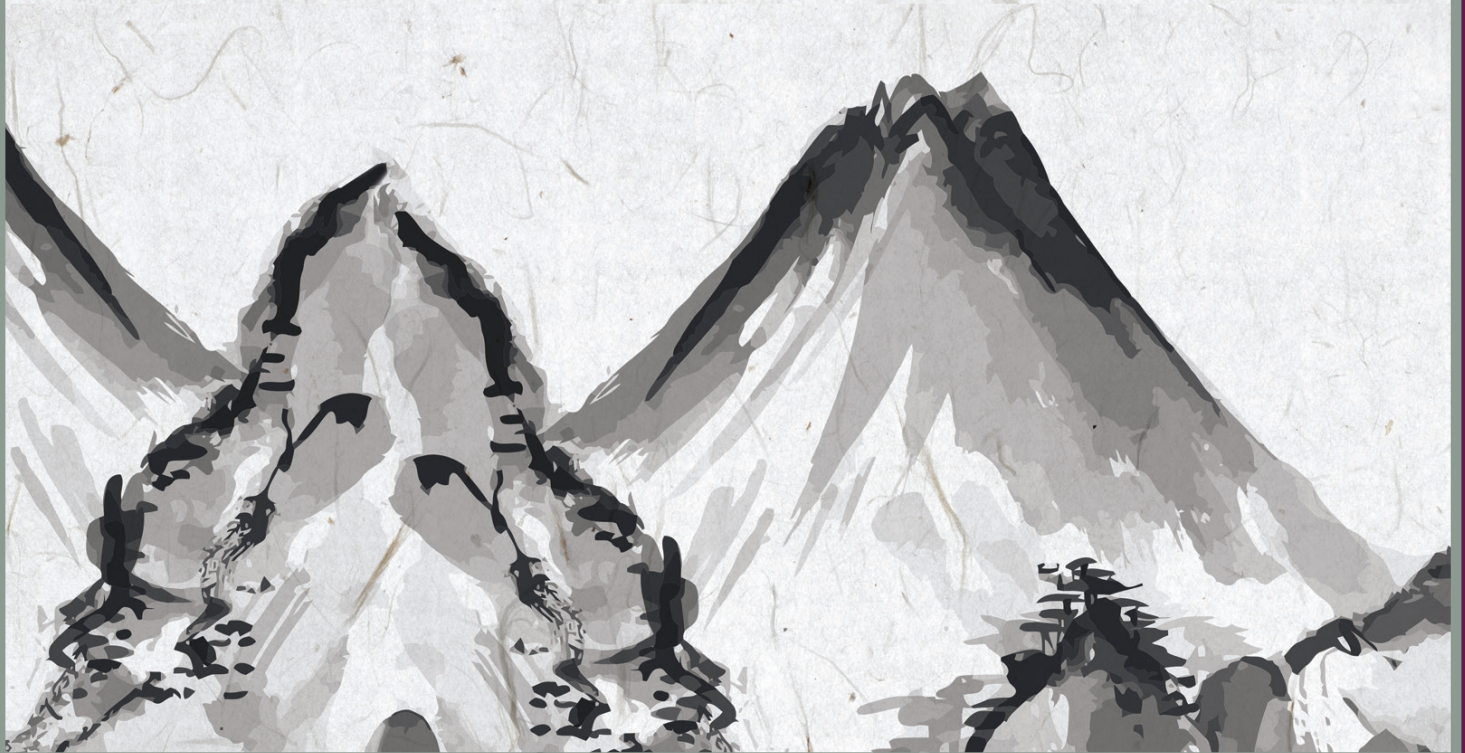
SAVE THE DATE

---

**PRIVATE TEN DAY IMMERSIVE  
EXPERIENCE OF ENERGY MASTERY:  
THE DANCE OF THE MASCULINE AND FEMININE  
BY LYNDA CAESARA**

**MARCH 22-31, 2019  
LA MAINAZ HOTEL RESTAURANT & RESORT**

For registration details, please contact:  
Fernanda Becker | [fernanda.becker@mobiusleadership.com](mailto:fernanda.becker@mobiusleadership.com)





IN MEMORIAM



**DOUG SILSBEE**

**1954-2018**

*Mobius Senior Expert*

*Author and Pioneer of Presence-based Leadership and Coaching*

*Master Somatic Coach with the prestigious Strozzi Institute*



*Photography by Doug Silsbee*



THE  
NEXT PRACTICE  
INSTITUTE



**MOBIUS**<sup>™</sup>  
EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

**MOBIUS USA**

1254 Chestnut St., 1st Floor, Newton, MA 02464 USA | +1 781 237 1362

**MOBIUS Europe**

UK: 15a Saint Georges Mews, Primrose Hill, London NW1 8XE UK | +44 20 7586 5414

Switzerland: Regus Genève Rhône 8 Building Rue du Commerce 4, 2ème étage 1204 Geneva, Switzerland  
+41 78 746 99 05

---

For more about the offerings of Mobius Executive Leadership please go to [www.mobiusleadership.com](http://www.mobiusleadership.com).

To discuss bringing Mobius leadership programs, trainings or executive coaching to your organization please write [John.Abbuzzese@mobiusleadership.com](mailto:John.Abbuzzese@mobiusleadership.com).

*All images herein are by Michael Robbins, Mobius Transformational Artist and Transformational Faculty member.*

*Design by Mobius Art Director, Mary Allen.*

*This magazine has been edited by Mobius Chief Knowledge Officer, Nathalie Hourihan.*