# IMAGINATIVE LEADERSHIP

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## DISCOVER HOW TO USE "RELATIONSHIP PRINCIPLES" TO NAVIGATE BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS AND LEAD MORE EFFECTIVELY

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Although we are Registered Psychologists in Alberta Canada, the information presented in this book should not be considered as therapy or coaching nor training in psychology, therapy, or coaching.

Always know your limitations and factor in your own good judgement and common sense.

# SYMBOLS USED IN THIS MANUAL

The following are symbols used in the manual to help the reader understand the information.

Indicates an important concept

**Example** Indicates an example

**?** Indicates a question

The information presented in this manual is best learned when it is applied to your own life.  Take time to answer the questions in the spaces provided.

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# INTRODUCTION

Relationship Principles are a "way of thinking" that can help you understand life in a clearer way.  Relationship principles can enable you to see many things in a different light to get more control and success in your world, such as:

- Relationships
- Office politics
- Stress
- Your own ability to become a successful leader

These principles have been used by thousands of people who are successful leaders in multiple areas of their lives.

The authors have summed up the training we have had into what we call "Relationship Principles" and find them to be extremely useful in teaching our coaching and consulting clients to live their best lives and become leaders themselves.  These principles have transformed the way we look at the world and the way we live our own lives...including our careers, our marriage, and our relationships with others.

This manual was written as a guide to support and encourage readers to become leaders in their own lives. Leadership can mean different things to different people. However, there are many generalizations that can be made which apply to everyone in the pursuit of leadership.  This manual uses Bowen Family Systems Theory as a theoretical guide for creating leadership in

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one's life.  It serves as an introduction to *"thinking systems."*

An underlying assumption in this manual is that the more aware one is of relationship principles, the less likely one is to be sabotaged by them.  Knowledge of these relationship principles enables predictability within relationships.  Predictability allows for preparation in order to manage situations effectively.  Predictability also prevents automatic/emotional reactions while encouraging clearly thought out plans of action.

Most people spend much of their time reacting to emotional forces of which they aren't even aware.  Without awareness, these patterns will be repeated again and again with the same unwanted results.

The information in this manual presents an opportunity to *think about* one's life, relationships, and challenges rather than just continuing in the same manner, with no real change.  The information in this manual can facilitate an understanding of the "big picture" and factors that tend to be invisible to the untrained eye.

This manual was created to help people to think in a different way to create change in their lives.  That is to "think systems."  Many concepts in this manual may be familiar to some readers and serve as a reminder of effective methods of leadership.  Many concepts will also be new and serve as important information for creating change.

The concepts in this manual have been taken from many sources of Bowen Family Systems Theory, which can be found in the references section.  The concepts are not

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new, but rather have existed since the 1950's, and many concepts have existed for much longer. These are not our original concepts, but rather we are sharing the information we have learned over the years. The main authors that have contributed to systems theory and originated the concepts and terminology presented in this manual are Murray Bowen, Michael Kerr, Roberta Gilbert, and Edwin Friedman. Please note that we are presenting the concepts and terminology we have learned from the above authors and others.

The presentation of concepts in this manual is our understanding of them, which may include personal bias and/or misunderstanding and in this way may be limited. We encourage readers to not only take our perspective, but to read other books containing Bowen Family Systems Theory.

Only take the information that makes sense and works for you and leave the rest. The suggestions in this manual may not work for your particular situation and you are thus encouraged to obtain independent advice and counsel prior to using solely the information in this manual to make life decisions.

The format of this book includes several introductory concepts to increase one's understanding of oneself, relationships, and leadership. It has the following order:

- A look at one's true self and one's capacity for leadership.
- Explaining the change process for creating leadership.
- The influence of the brain on change and leadership.

- The influence of anxiety and stress on leadership.
- Thinking about the influence of relationships on oneself.
- Describing relationship patterns.
- Defining leadership.

# PART ONE

# LEADERSHIP AS PART OF YOUR TRUE SELF

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# SESSION 1
## CONNECTING TO YOUR TRUE SELF

People spend much of their time living out their lives from just a surface level of themselves. This may mean doing what they think others expect from them, working only to survive, or aimlessly going through daily activities. Living from a surface level of self can be seen as a "victim" mentality. That is, believing that things are "done" to you and are beyond your control.

The true self does not buy into the victim mentality, but rather takes full responsibility for life and all outcomes. The true self is the part of oneself that holds on to integrity, values, and principles on which one bases one's life. This is the deepest and most profound part of the self that is often hidden or dismissed due to the demands of daily life.

The true self doesn't change easily. It is the most emotionally mature part of oneself which allows knowledge of the difference between fact and feeling and allows action based on fact, rather than reaction based on feeling.

When connected to their true selves, people tend to live out a purpose in their lives. They tend to possess great conviction about their beliefs and goals. Living from one's true self means living a self-defined version of oneself and one's life. It means knowing who you are in relation to all important areas and people in your life. It means knowing yourself, being congruent with your values, and living with integrity. It is a life lived out in action, rather than unconscious reaction.

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Everyone can have a life purpose. Everyone has the capacity to move their lives towards their goals. Everyone has something greater than themselves that they are called to create or achieve.

It is part of basic human nature to look beyond and reach for something greater than oneself. The vision this requires extends beyond current realities and onto a path of possibility and imagination.

*Imagination* helps us achieve goals and dreams. Imagination can help create the path that the deeper self knows it needs to be living in order to feel truly alive. We have titled this manual "Imaginative Leadership" because we believe imagination is the key to taking leadership in life and to living an extraordinary life.

Imagination is part of the true self that is within you. This deeper part of you can be awakened though contemplation and examination. There are many questions in this manual that are designed to help you use your imagination and find the passion and life purpose within you. One of the main purposes of this manual is to help you broaden your awareness of internal thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and of your relationships. When you see your life realistically you can then take action to change the aspects that aren't working for you.

## 1.1 BE TRUE TO YOURSELF AND YOUR SOURCE

Living in a way that is true to oneself usually means being true to one's source, whatever or whoever that is. So you have to ask yourself, what or who is your source. What

guides your sense of right and wrong? One's source usually has influence over one's principles and values.

*Principles* are those characteristics that define the core of who you are and what you believe. They are what is left when all else is stripped away. *Values* are those things or people that are important to you and that you want to have a focus on in your life. Think about the following questions (Based on Brian Tracy's The Psychology of Achievement: The Phoenix Seminar, 1986).

**?** **What are the three principles that are the most important to you?**

**Examples: integrity, patience, peace, unconditional love, commitment**

**Organize them in order of importance...**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

**?** **What are the five things you value most in your life at this time?**

**Examples: family, spouse, physical health, spirituality, money, success, a house, children, etc**

**Organize them in order of importance…**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

The question about principles will tell you how to guide your decision making.  When confronted with a decision, simply think about how to solve it based on your three guiding principles.

The question about your values will tell you what you need to change in your life at this time.  The more your life is organized around the things that you value, the more purpose and passion you will feel in your life.  Conversely, the more your life is not organized around the things you value, the more stuck, hopeless, and bored you are likely to feel.

## 1.2   ARE YOUR VALUES AND PRINCIPLES INCONGRUENT WITH YOUR CURRENT REALITY?

If you are like the majority of the people we work with in our coaching practice, the above exercise will have jolted you out of the deceptive warmth of your comfort zone and helped you to realize some of the potential reasons why your life may feel off track.

The sad reality is that most of us don't live our lives according to our deepest personal principles and values. The reasons for that are described below.

> **The truth of the matter is that you have created this situation for yourself. You and no one else have manifested your current reality.**

Even though it may seem obvious to you that you want change in your life, you probably haven't created it yet, or at least not its full extent.

There are undoubtedly many factors involved in keeping you stuck in your current situation. Although there are many reasons you may be stuck, they aren't excuses for behaving irresponsibly.

## 1.3   THE INFLUENCE OF PARENTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Most people grew up learning to look to their parents for life direction. Children typically aren't able to take on altering the course of their life paths by themselves. As a result, most life paths are more or less chosen by well-intentioned parents.

Here's the rub. Most adults continue to act as if they are children at an emotional level, still expecting someone else to set their course and mark their destiny. Many

people continue to look for pseudo parental figures for decisions and direction.

**There are many people who may try to fill in for parents, namely spouses, bosses, or co-workers, but they can never get it quite right.  In fact, parents usually don't get it quite right because they were making decisions based on their own guiding principles, not their children's.**

Unless you become crystal clear about who *you* are, what you believe, and what you want in your life, you will be led by others trying to do this for you.  When you allow others to do this for you, you will never be on track with your own purpose and passion in life because these are deeply personal things.

It's not until you take 100% responsibility for your life that you can truly have the capacity to change the outcome of it.  This involves recognizing the difference between your "self" and others "selves."

At this point it is important for you to re-engage with your "self."  Self in this description has the same meaning as "your house" or "your job."  Self is something in your possession that can change to varying degrees.

What we are asking you do to is to get more in touch with your "self" and rediscover or discover for the first time who you are, what you stand for, and what you want in your life.

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## 1.4  YOUR IMAGINATION

You are unique and your life direction has the potential to be as unique as you are.  When you stop and listen to your imagination, in what direction does it take you?  What do you really want in your life?  It is possible to use your imagination to take leadership in your life.

Use your imagination and consider the following questions (based on Brain Tracy's The Psychology of Achievement: Phoenix Seminary, 1986).

**?**   **If you were given one million dollars, what would you do with your time?**

    1. _____
    2. _____
    3. _____
    4. _____
    5. _____

**?**   **What are the top three things that most excite and interest you in this world?**

    1. _____
    2. _____
    3. _____

**?**

**What subjects hold your attention over time?**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

**?**

**What are you doing when time passes by the fastest?**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

**?**

**If you had a magic wand that would give you anything you wanted, with guarantee, what would you ask for?**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

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Your answers to the above questions should give you some ideas about who you are at this point in your life and what you really want.  Listening to your imagination can help you achieve the life you really want for yourself.

You become what you think about.  So, focusing on your answers to the above questions may help to create your goals much faster.  Think about how you would know when you are living out your dream life.  Make sure to write your answers.

**?**

    **I would know I am living out my dream life when my life looks like...**_____

_____

_____

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# SESSION 2
## EVERYTHING IS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

Now that you've had a chance to reflect on what you desire for your life and who you are as a separate individual, we can look at how you are connected to others.  One of the reasons that many people miss out on their desired life is because they don't realize how influential other people are on their functioning.  They mistakenly believe that their decision making and life direction are separate from those around them.

This is very deceptive because while it is important to become intimately conscious of oneself as a separate individual to have any hope of achieving one's goals and happiness, it is also important to recognize that one is part of an interconnected web of relationships.  This self versus relationship is a both/and concept, rather than an either/or concept.  This relationship web has immense power over each of us and our ability to navigate ourselves in this life.

**Everything in this world is made up of relationships.   Relational forces influence one's ability to create change and sustain it.  If you don't recognize this, then you will be at the whim of the relational forces around you.**

In order to create any kind of life direction and change, it is necessary to learn how to manage oneself within relationships.

## 2.1   NEWTONIAN AND QUANTUM PHYSICS PARADIGM SHIFT

Newtonian physics, based on Isaac Newton's work (1642-1727), presented a worldview that claimed everything to be separate and predictable.  Newton believed in the concepts of reductionism.  Reductionism means focusing the smallest parts of the whole.  He also believed in determinism, which is the law of cause and effect.  This is a mechanical way of looking at the universe, where everything works according to its individual nature (Ollhoff & Walcheski, 2002).

The Newtonian way of thinking about the world influenced many things, including the field of psychology.  The fathers of psychology created theories that suggested individuals were separate and mechanical.  For example, most theorists focused on the individual as separate from the larger whole of the individual's surroundings.  Although they believed the environment could influence the individual, they focused on the individual.

Alberta Einstein (1879-1955) introduced a different worldview than Newton.  Einstein brought on the age of quantum physics.  Quantum physics discovered that when things are reduced to their smallest parts, everything becomes an interaction and it is no longer relevant to focus on the individual parts at all (Ollhoff & Walcheski, 2002).  In Quantum physics, everything is interconnected

and dynamic.  That is, everything is in relationship with everything else and it is the relationships themselves that influence the functioning of the individual parts.

**The shift from Newtonian to Quantum physics represents a paradigm shift in thinking about how the universe functions and how we as human beings interact and function.**

## 2.2   THE DEVELOPMENT OF FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY AND "THINKING SYSTEMS"

Murray Bowen, a psychiatrist in the 1950's, created a paradigm shift in psychology similar to that in physics.  He shifted the worldview of therapy from a linear view of cause and effect (Newtonian view) to a systems view of relationships and interconnectedness (Quantum view).

Bowen used his skills of observation to notice how his patients functioned within their families.  Rather than focusing on the individual patient, he focused on the entire family and the relationships within the family.  He noticed that his patient's interactions with their families had the power to create healing *or* create more dysfunction within the patient.  He noticed patterned behaviour and principles on which relational functioning took place.

For example, he noticed that focusing his change efforts on the most dysfunctional member of the family, who was usually his patient, did little to promote change.  Trying to "fix" the patient didn't have much of an effect on the patient or the functioning of the family.  He noticed, however, that when he worked with the *most functional and motivated member* of the family, real change took place both within the family and within his patient.

Bowen became very curious about this relational process and spent many years observing families.  He created the Bowen Family Systems Theory of therapy based on his observations.  This theory focuses on the systems view of relationships and interconnectedness that transcends a linear cause and effect view.

This manual uses Bowen's concepts.  We call them "relationship principles."

Bowen Family Systems Theory has now been applied successfully to many different "groupings" of people, including business.  In fact, this theory has been successfully applied by many coaches and therapists trained in Bowen Theory in the field of business consulting.

It is from Bowen's observations that the emphasis on leadership arose.  It is the realization that only one person, usually the leader, is needed to create change in an entire group of people.

## 2.3   TAKING THE LEAD

Leadership begins when *you realize this is your life*.  You are the only one who can be responsible for your choices and their outcomes.  Leadership begins when you make a decision that you and only you can create and maintain the changes you want and need in your life.  No one else is going to do it for you.

**?**

**Think of a time when you took a leadership position in your life and created some kind of change.**

_____

_____

_____

If you allow others to make decisions for you, they will make decisions based on their own vantage point.  If you step up and make decisions for yourself you will have a chance of achieving some or all of *your goals and your vision*.

# SESSION 3
## GETTING STUCK

The relationships of which you are a part compose a system of interconnected and mutually influencing people. You may have several different, but interlocking, systems in your life. For example, your family comprises a system, your workplace comprises a system, and even your friendships comprise a system.

These systems are important to be aware of because they have the power to prevent you from reaching your goals. Never underestimate the influence of the relationships in your life over your functioning.

The reality is that once you take leadership in your own life others will actively sabotage your efforts. They won't applaud you, they won't affirm you, and they may actually get a little vicious about your initiative.

Why is this, you ask? It is because due to the interconnected web of relationships, they not only influence you but you influence them. When you make decisions for your life and act on them others around you are affected. And remember this…people don't like change. So, any change you introduce is likely to be fought.

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# 3.1    HOMEOSTASIS

People don't like change because of a little thing called "homeostasis," or "comfort zone."  All living things stay living because they create and maintain a status quo.  That is, all living things have an organizational process that keeps things the same.  It is not only living things, but systems in general that maintain a comfort zone.

For example, the human body is a system composed of many interconnected and mutually influencing parts.  The body maintains the same blood volume, the same Ph level, and the same temperature, give or take.  Maintaining homeostasis is a matter of survival for most living beings and systems.

**When one part of a system in changed, the entire system must shift to compensate.  So, when you change your behaviour, everyone else in the system must shift in reaction to you.**

The only way to take a leadership role in life is to *focus on changing yourself*, not on changing anyone else.   Even though you aren't trying to change others, they will feel that you are trying to change them.  This is simply due to the fact that others are part of an interconnected system with you.  Any change they experience is a by product of your own change and leadership in your own life.

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Leadership and change create a shift in the homeostasis and tend to be recognized as a threat to survival by others and sometimes even by oneself.  This threat to ones' survival isn't recognized as such on a conscious level. Rather it is the primitive parts of the brain (explained later) that react to a change in the homeostasis.

When the homeostasis is allowed to maintain itself, everyone is comfortable because they know what to expect.  Most people want to stay inside their comfort zones.  This "comfort" may be very deceiving, because although the comfort zone is familiar it is often just another way of saying "tolerating boredom."

A change in the homeostasis creates discomfort for everyone in the system, even though this discomfort may be exactly what everyone needs to bring passion and imagination back into their lives.  Purposefully directed change has the capacity to get people unstuck, and moving towards health and transformation.  But, don't expect people to like it when you introduce it.  Real change involves getting uncomfortable.

**?** **Name a time when you felt that others prevented you from achieving a goal?** _____

_____

_____

Think of homeostasis as a natural phenomenon, but one that causes problems when you are trying to change yourself.

## 3.2 CHANGE BACK REQUESTS

As a result of you upsetting the proverbial apple cart in your relational system, people will make attempts to try to get you to change back. We call these "change back requests." The three most common forms of this are:

1. **You are wrong!**
2. **Change back to the way you used to be!**
3. **If you don't change back...these are the consequences!**

**What is the most common type of change back request that you have experienced from others when you have attempted a change in your life and what was it like to experience this?** _____

_____

_____

**?** **What is the most common type of change back request that you use with people who try to change around you and what triggered you to use this behaviour to sabotage others' change?** _____

_____

Prepare yourself for change back requests when you attempt to create change in your life. The change itself doesn't feel comfortable, but the attacks from your closest associates or loved ones can feel absolutely terrible.

These requests are designed to make people see the error of their ways and return to a "right" way of behaving. This, of course, means returning to the status quo, the stuckness, and the boredom. But, it is comfortable and that's why people want you to return to it, so they also can return to it. It is based on the fear of the unknown, as many people would rather stay in an unhappy familiar situation than risk a happy unfamiliar one.

Being confronted with change back requests is a challenging time for anyone. But, if you can *maintain your course* by not letting others stop you or diminish your efforts, then real change is possible.

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**The following are three things to keep in mind when confronted with these behaviours.**

1. **Don't attack (in reaction to others)**
2. **Don't defend**
3. **Don't run away**

You have to be very conscious about navigating yourself around these behaviours and recognizing them for what they are.  And, most importantly, don't take the change back requests personally.  They only speak to the discomfort and short sightedness of others.

**In fact, when you experience this behaviour you can congratulate yourself because it is a sign that you have initiated enough change for yourself that others in your system also feel it.  It is a sign of success, albeit a painful one.**

## 3.3   THE TOGETHERNESS FORCE

There are two basic life forces when looking through a relational perspective.  These are the *pull for individuality* and the *pull for togetherness*.  It is individuality that we have focused on in this manual because individuality is the

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key to leadership and change, as only individuals are capable of creating and maintaining change.  Togetherness describes a pressure to be part of the group, be a team player, and play by the rules, whereas individuality describes a focus on personal values, integrity, and life direction.

Due to the nature of a system, the togetherness pull is usually much stronger than that for individuality. Togetherness is a characteristic of the homeostasis, as everyone in the system interacts in the same repetitive way.  In many ways togetherness functions to maintain the homeostasis by keeping everyone held together in the comfort of the familiar.

**Example** **An example of being pulled by togetherness is caving into other's demands and losing sight of your own goals and dreams.**

When you attempt change, the pull for togetherness can be part of the change back requests.   Others don't want you to break the cozy togetherness of the group.

**?** **What are signs that you are being pulled by the togetherness forces in your workplace or at home?**

_____

_____

_____

**?**    **How do you typically respond to pressures for togetherness?** _____

_____

_____

Togetherness forces typically become stronger under stress.  Thus, when a system experiences stress it will be more difficult for a leader to take charge against togetherness pressure and meet the stress with thoughtful change efforts.  However, imagination, clarity, and direction are exactly what are needed in stressful situations because these are the things that can create lasting change.

**?**    **When have you been able to resist togetherness pressure and maintain your course for achieving your goals?** _____

_____

_____

## 3.4   FUSION

Togetherness is often based out of "fusion."  The concept of fusion is that relationships are based on undefined selves rather than clearly defined selves.  When in fused

relationships people will give up and borrow "self" from each other.  There is a trading of self based on "pseudo self."

**Pseudo self is the part of the self that does not have a clear life purpose or direction.  It changes based on context and who one is involved with at the time.**

Togetherness can be thought of as a conglomeration of fused selves within the comfort of homeostasis.

**Example** **The chameleon effect of changing personality or "color" depending on who one associates with is an example of pseudo self.**
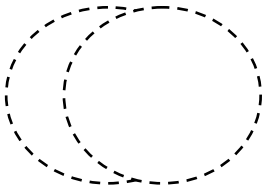
**Fused Selves**                    **Less Fused, More Individual Selves**
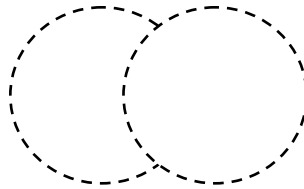
True self is the opposite of pseudo self.  True self refers to those characteristics of self that are non-negotiable, are based on one's principles, and don't change with context.  True self was discussed in session 1.

Everyone is fused within their relationships to some degree.  The people that are capable of the most individuality, imagination, and leadership, however, are usually those that are the least stuck in this fusion and have the most well-defined true self.

Individuality in this context doesn't mean separation.  Rather, it means a clearly defined self and life purpose that can be in connection to others.   Separation is usually just a reaction to the fusion and pull for togetherness.  Separation is not typically a clearly defined personal stand.

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# SESSION 4
## MANIFESTING CHANGE

Change is something that is inevitable in life. One of the only things that can be counted on in life is that things will change. However, the only way to make things change in a direction that will support one's dreams and purpose is to take charge of the direction of that change.

Of course none of us can control change 100%, but we can influence it to some degree based on our choices and actions.

To change is to leave the comfortable and known for the uncomfortable and unknown. Because we are all influenced by the comfort zone, we usually fear change. The large majority of people fear the uncomfortable and unknown and will use a lot of energy avoiding them.

The irony is that the energy people use trying to stay comfortable could be used directing change in a favourable direction. If people could just accept some discomfort and face their fear of leaving what is familiar, they could move out of their prison and break free into a new way of thinking and living.

## 4.1   CHANGE CREATES A SENSE OF LOSS

Most of us have very busy lives. They are full of activities and commitments and we usually have little room for anything else. When one makes a decision to change one's life one will inevitably have to eliminate certain

things to make room for others.  You can't add on to what is already full.

**?**
**Take a moment to think about what you are willing to eliminate from your life right now to introduce something new?** _____

_____
_____

**?**
**Take a moment and consider what you might fill that time with that would bring you closer to your goals or preferred life direction?** _____

_____
_____

With change comes a sense of loss.  Think about your answer to the first question.  Do you have any feelings of loss about what you would eliminate from your life if you were to embark on a mission for change in your life?

Loss and grief are normal reactions to change, even planned change.  The typical stages of grief are:

**Denial :  You deny or become numb to the loss.**

**Anger:  You become angry about that which you feel you are losing.  You may become angry at yourself, someone else, or the change in general.**

**Bargaining:  You attempt to rationalize the change or change back.**

**Depression:  You become saddened by what the loss represents in your world.**

**Acceptance:  You embrace the change as your new reality.**

If you notice yourself going through the above reaction to change, know that it is to be expected.  We have to let go of the old in order to embrace the new.  Grief is the process of letting go.

More importantly, we have to be clear as to what we are moving towards (i.e., our goals) and use that clarity to pull ourselves into the future.  Instead of possibly having our "grief emotions" and other change back behaviours keep us stuck.

## 4.2  CHANGE CREATES A SENSE OF FEAR

Change represents leaving the known for the unknown. Most of us fear what we do not understand and what is yet unchartered territory.  When you sense fear when thinking or acting upon change, congratulate yourself. Fear is a sign that you are moving ahead and making progress.

Most importantly, don't let fear stop you from maintaining your change.  Because you have your own internal homeostatic mechanisms working within you, you will shy away from change.  The fear is just part of the homeostasis, which is meant to keep you safe and comfortable.  In order to actually take leadership in your life you will need to face the fear and *keep moving forward*.

**?**

**What is it that you fear when you think about changing the circumstances of your life?**  _____

_____

_____

## 4.3  THE SACRIFICE OF CHANGE

Another complaint we hear about leadership and change is that it requires too much effort and too much sacrifice. This is very true indeed.  To create new outcomes in your

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life you will likely have to sacrifice many things, such as time, energy, and leisure.

Usually change comes in spurts, so that you will only have to sacrifice for a while, then rest and allow the changes to settle, then sacrifice again.  Think of change as needing only small bursts of energy and sacrifice that together create new outcomes in your life.  But, be prepared to make sacrifice when it is appropriate.

It is also important to clarify your values and principles by considering what you would be willing to sacrifice and what you wouldn't be willing to sacrifice to create change.

**?** **What are you willing to sacrifice in your life to create change?** _____
_____
_____

**?** **What are you NOT willing to sacrifice in your life to create change?** _____
_____
_____

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## 4.4  THE UNCERTAINTY OF CHANGE

One of the most deceiving beliefs in life is that there is such a thing as certainty.  In order to find comfort, we tend to make up a story that our reality now is guaranteed to remain the same in the future.  Nothing could be further from the truth.  Our reality now is only based on the "seeds" we sowed previously.  Our reality in the future will be based on the "seeds" we sow today.

**?**    **What "seeds" have you sown in the past to create your present reality – good or bad (i.e., what have you done to create the state of your marriage, your job, your house, your finances)?** *Sit quietly and ask this question. Wait for the answer to come up.* _____

_____

_____

**?**    **What might you need to do differently in the future to create a different outcome for yourself?** *Again, sit quietly and wait for the answer to come to you.*

_____

_____

_____

The following are areas in which people may mistakenly perceive certainty and take for granted:

1. Job – believing their job will exist unchanged next year or even next month.
2. Economy – believing the economy won't change and that they can spend a year from now as they spend today.
3. Marriage – believing their marriage will continue on indefinitely, with little or no effort.

**?** **What do you take for granted as certain in your life?** _____

_____

When you take leadership in your own life you will be faced with uncertainty because you are knowingly creating change. If efforts at leadership result in change, then your future reality will be different than it is today. However, you haven't lived the change yet so you don't know exactly what it will look like and if you will truly want it. This "not knowing" how change will feel is another aspect of change that keeps people from intentionally focusing on it. Are you going to let it stop you?

## 4.5  CHANGE IS AN INDIVIDUAL TASK

Due to the nature of the togetherness forces, it is very difficult to achieve change at the group level.  One or more members tend to sabotage the change for the sake of keeping the homeostasis and all movement forward is halted.

Remember, we are all part of interconnected relationship systems.  We are always in relationship.  It is often believed that it takes a group of people or a relationship to create change efforts.  This is the philosophy of "team" focused projects in the business world.

However, these team focused projects often fail or don't get very far from the comfortable status quo.  They tend towards "group think," where everyone stays within the bounds of the togetherness pressures.  Group think is usually just a way to do more of the same and not achieve real change.

**As Dr. Bowen discovered in his research, it only takes one person to create change in a group.  When one person changes then the entire group is thrown off from the status quo and must reorient in some way.  After the initial change back requests, if the one leading the change can maintain his or her course then real change can be achieved.**

To achieve real change, individuals must be in charge. If you want change in your life you must take 100% responsibility to achieve it.

Individuals who have imagination, purpose, and a direction can take themselves and others from the known into the unknown. This transformational change can break the boundaries of conventional business and foster giant leaps in productivity and performance of a company. Only individuals can achieve "out of the box" thinking.

Motivation toward change is also a personal drive. Motivation is usually based on clarity about one's own life purpose, direction, and path. When individuals can align their own purpose with that of the business they work for, then they are intrinsically motivated to produce greater and better output. It is in their own best interest to do so because the motivation and reasons for it are internal. Make your business goals congruent with your personal goals to create motivation at work.

Greater productivity and performance arise when imagination and possibility come into play. Possibility is usually based on the imagination of *one* mind. This one mind then leads the group toward a new reality or vision.

## 4.6   REDEFINE THE DEFINITION OF LOVE, EMPATHY, AND RESPECT

One of the biggest traps that we see our clients get stuck in is that of the pull from others for love, empathy or respect. Think of these as calls for more togetherness. Being a leader in your own life requires an unwavering

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focus *on yourself, your purpose, and your path*.  It takes commitment and discipline.  However, others tend to see these characteristics as being selfish.

In fact, any time you break out on your own and focus at least as much on individuality as on togetherness, your actions will likely be seen by others as selfish.  When others are focused on togetherness, any individuality is seen as a threat.

Leadership is something that only individuals can pursue and this individuality is perceived as a threat to togetherness of the homeostasis.  You may perceive your change as a positive project in your life.  Others will probably perceive it differently because they cannot understand your individuality or life purpose, only you can.  Others may (and often do) see the value in your change efforts after they have been accomplished, but usually not until then.  *Don't wait for others to understand your change efforts because they may only understand them after completion...or they may never understand them at all.*

It is wise to not tell others of your plans for change.  Rather, just do it and let them notice the results.  This prevents others from shooting down your dreams before you get them started.

When others perceive that you are acting selfishly they will often attempt to stop your change by moralizing and requesting you follow the rules of *their version* of right and wrong.  The demands for love, empathy and respect are ways that the more dependent people in the system try to control your efforts for change and try to control

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you.  When they come at you as demands they are ways of keeping you stuck and preventing you from changing.

**?**

**In what ways have you experienced moralizing and demands from others when you have attempted change?  Did you let it stop you?** _____

_____

_____

You don't have to accept other's versions of right and wrong when it comes to your life direction.  You don't have to be at the mercy of other's emotions.

Think through your own understanding of right and wrong before accepting other's versions blindly.

## 4.7   APPROVAL IS OVERRATED

Society is largely based on gaining approval from others. Much of the advertising world and many love stories are based on winning the adoration of others.  Just think of the car add that illustrates others looking longingly at you in your new hybrid.  Or, think of the last romance movie that pushed how good it feels to be admired and wanted by another.

**Example** **The scene in the movie Jerry Maguire, where the male characters says "you complete me," is a great example of focusing on the other for validation and approval.**

**When focused on approval you are focused on the other(s). You are trying to figure out what they want and what will make them happy. When your focus is on someone else it is not on yourself. When your focus is not on yourself, then it is next to impossible to be a leader and create change in your life.**

Seeking approval usually results in getting stuck in fused togetherness.

The more you can adopt an attitude that approval from others is overrated, the freer you will be to pursue your own path. As stated above, others usually won't applaud efforts you make toward change and personal growth until your efforts have matured into results.

It takes much time and energy from the time you develop a vision and plan toward change to the time when you actually see results from that change. As stated above, it's like planting a garden with seeds (i.e., imagination) and waiting for the flowers and vegetation to become a reality. Others typically won't understand or approve of your efforts until they actually see the flowers and beauty that

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have been created.  It is your job to hold onto your dreams until they become a reality, because no one else will do this for you.  If you expect them to, then you will probably abandon your dreams long before they have a chance to develop and blossom.

Think of approval as a by product of doing the hard work of creating your own life path and purpose.  When approval comes after following through with your dreams it will be truly sweet.  This means that your focus must be on yourself and your own path, rather than what you think others want from you.  Focus on your own path before considering what others think of you.

**?**  **How important to you is what others think of you?  How have you let this stop you in the past?**

_____

_____

_____

## 4.8   DEVELOP CLARITY

Start developing the seeds for your dreams by figuring out who you are as a unique individual.  What do you want in your life?  Who do you want to share it with?  What will you have to sacrifice in order to achieve it?  What will you have to risk to get there?

Although it takes time and increased awareness to develop your passion, goals, and purpose, take a moment to jot down some ideas about what these are for you at this time in your life.  It is helpful to answer these questions for both your professional and personal life.

**?**
 • **Your personal passion:**_____

_____
_____

**?**
 • **Your life goals:**_____

_____
_____

**?**
 • **Your life purpose:**_____

_____
_____

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## 4.9   THE DIRECTION OF CHANGE

Taking leadership in your life means taking control of the direction of change.  This is best done intentionally and through thoughtful planning.

The answers to the above questions about your passion, goals, and life purpose were intended to get you connected to your emotional side.  Emotions are the driver toward change.  They rev up your energy levels and propel you forward.  Emotions are useful when they are connected to strong thinking abilities.

**You can use your thinking abilities to make a plan to create the change you desire.  Many people believe they should not ask how change will occur, but only focus on what they want changed.  We believe there is truth to this.  However, we believe it helps to have a plan of how to create the change (using your thinking abilities) and correct it along the way.**

Your initial plan will probably not be exactly the right course.  However, if you are open to corrections to your plan, having a plan will probably propel your change much faster than having no sense of direction at all.

Consider these thought based questions of planning the direction of your change.

**?**   **What activity could I pursue each day to bring me closer to my goals?**_____

_____

_____

**?**   **What activity is my core activity – the most important one to bring me closer to my goals?**____

_____

_____

**?**   **If I did these activities every day, how much closer to my goals could I be a month from now?** _

_____

_____

**?**   **If I followed through with these activities, how many of my goals could I have actualized 6 months from now?** _____

_____

_____

# 4.10  THE INFLUENCE OF MENTORS

Consider those people who you admire.  We will call these people your mentors, whether you have actually met them or not.  Having them in mind can help to propel you towards more success for yourself.

It is important to visualize the outcome of the goals you set for yourself.  Mentors' stories, challenges, and successes can be very inspirational for creating leadership in your own life.

Having mentors available for your imagination can help you to visualize change within yourself and your own life as you allow yourself to get inspired by them.

**Example** **A current day mentor might be Tiger Woods.  He is someone who works hard and has excelled at his field.  It is easy to see that he has sacrificed much to get to his level of golf but reaps the rewards in terms of money, freedom, and fame.**

Think of your mentors and ask yourself the following questions:

**?** **What leadership qualities does this person(s) illustrate?** _____

_____

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**?** **What sacrifice might this person have had to make in order to reach his or her goals?** _____

_____

_____

**?** **In what ways do I aspire to be like this person?**

_____

_____

_____

**?** **In what ways could I hold the image of this person in mind when I am challenged with obstacles toward creating my own dreams?** _____

_____

_____

# PART TWO
## THE HARDWARE OF THE BRAIN

### SESSION 5:  THE INSTINCTUAL AND FEELINGS BRAINS – THE LOWER BRAIN CENTERS

### SESSION 6:  THE THINKING BRAIN

# SESSION 5
## THE INSTINCTUAL AND FEELING BRAIN – THE LOWER BRAIN CENTERS

All humans are alike when it comes to leadership and change.  The reason for this is due to the wiring of our brains.  We share the same capabilities and obstacles because we have in common the physiology of the brain.

Our brains are intricately designed for those things that would keep us alive and keep us uniquely human. Understanding how the brain works can help to understand the complexities of leadership and change.

## 5.1   THE TRIUNE BRAIN

The brain is composed of three distinct parts and is thus called the "triune" brain, "tri" meaning three.  These parts are interconnected and mutually influential.

Thinking Brain          Feeling Brain      Instinctual Brain



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## 5.2   THE INSTINCTUAL BRAIN

The first brain is similar to the brains of reptiles and as a result is often called the "reptilian brain."  It is also referred to as the instinctual brain because it provides mostly instinctual responses.  This brain is at the back of the head and contains the spinal cord and cerebellum.  Because it has these structures, it is intimately connected to the body.

The spinal cord is the relay station between the brain and body, sending messages back and forth.  As you've probably noticed, when someone suffers a spinal cord injury their body and brain are not able to communicate to one another to produce movement.

This is the part of the brain that is preoccupied with survival.  Similar to the actions of an amphibian, it works mainly to preserve life and protect from danger.  Its primary concern is self-preservation.

This brain is defensive against any potential threat in the environment.

The instinctual brain will send chemical changes throughout the body to alert the body to any potential threat.  The body will react with the primal mechanisms of flight, fight, or freeze.

**?** **Name a time when you reacted with fight, flight, or freeze.  What was the outcome of this reaction?**

_____

_____

_____

**?** **How did you get yourself out of the fight, flight, or freeze reaction?** _____

_____

_____

When we operate from this brain, we simply act out of instinct and behave in automatic and patterned ways.

**When stress is high, this brain will automatically take over to preserve self.**

Just think of a time when you were very stressed.  You probably acted more like a reptile than your usual human self, showing no sense of humour, a restricted ability to think, and little ability to be playful or engage with others.

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Imagine playing with a pet lizard.  Lizards don't cuddle or show emotion other than reflexive and automatic responses.  They simply act out of instinct.

## 5.3   THE FEELING BRAIN

The second brain, or feeling brain, is similar to the brains of mammals and for that reason is often called the "mamillian brain."  This brain is located above the reptilian brain near the center of the human head.  The instinctual brain, in combination with the feeling brain, are referred to as the "lower brain centers."  These two brains comprise the primitive parts of the brain.

Like the instinctual brain, the feeling brain operates on automatic patterns and reactions.

**The feeling brain is concerned with feelings, connection with others, and survival.**

The automatic behaviour of the feeling brain is formed through both natural *instinctual patterns* and *learned patterns*, which are usually picked up during childhood.  These patterned ways of functioning arise without thinking.  Rather, they are merely reactions to the environment.

Imagine playing with a dog.  The dog is able to cuddle, able to play, and can connect with other animals and people.

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However, the dog's behaviour is patterned and automatic. It doesn't think about how to react, rather it just reacts. For example, a dog will automatically chase after a ball when you throw it.

Often when people try to come up with a reason for their behaviour they will try to explain it based on their feelings. "I wanted the candy" or "I did it because I love her." Asking the question "why" usually doesn't get an answer based on any objective facts.  Rather, the automatic behaviour that probably created the "why" is likely based in the feeling brain.  It is subjective and won't provide much information to help you change the situation.  Most human behaviour is simple reactions led by the feeling brain.  The feeling brain doesn't know why it does anything, so asking it won't give you much assistance.

The togetherness pressures are rooted in this brain.  Not much thought goes into acting from this brain.

This brain does not have the capacity to think its way out of a situation.  It merely reacts based on automatic patterns.

The more focused you are on feeling, the more you are coming from this brain and the more stuck in togetherness, homeostasis, and subjectivity you will be.

It can be very helpful to get this brain in alliance with the thinking brain because the feeling brain provides a great amount of energy and motivation for change.  But energy and motivation are only useful if they are pointed in the right direction, which can only be judged by the thinking brain, explained in the next section.

## 5.4  THE EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

A structure within the feeling brain, called the "amygdala," is the early warning system of the brain (Steinke, 2006). Its job is to constantly scan the environment for threats to safety.  It is always focused on threat.  Its only response to a threat is to direct the body to fight, flight, or freeze.

The amygdala is important because we cannot plan goals or live our lives if we don't know how to protect ourselves. This part of the brain is essential to maintain survival.

**The amygdala has a notoriously poor ability to correctly assess the actual threat of a situation. This is because it bases a lot of its reactions on *past experiences*.  The amygdala has no concept of time.  So, if something was threatening in the past the amygdala will respond as if that same or similar situation is a threat now, even if it isn't.**

**Example  For example, if your parents shamed you every time you said "no" to them when you were three years old, your amygdala would have reacted to this shaming as a threat to your (emotional) survival.  As an adult you would still find it difficult to say "no" to someone because your amygdala would still be telling you it is a threat to your survival to say "no."**

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Every time the amygdala recognizes a threat it will sound an alarm. However, the range of response to this alarm is so limited (i.e., fight, flight or freeze) that it will keep you from trying anything new.

To take leadership and create change in your life you will probably have to face situations that at one time registered as a threat. That means going directly against the alarm of the amygdala. The fear discussed earlier as part of the change process is linked to this part of the brain because when you try something new or try something you have failed before you will feel fear due to the alarm and chemical changes instigated by this part of the brain.

When you are under stress the amygdala will tend to assess more and more of the environment as a threat. The more threat it senses, the more likely it is to assess the environment as a threat. It can build on itself this way until everything appears threatening.

This would eventually harm your health, because your body levels of cortisol, adrenaline, and other hormones would be constantly spiked to respond to danger. Thus, it is not smart to allow your lower brain to be in charge.

# SESSION 6
## THE THINKING BRAIN

### 6.1   THE THINKING BRAIN

The third brain or "thinking brain" is that part of the
human brain that is distinctly human.  It is not shared with
reptiles or animals, as only humans have the distinct
ability to think.

This brain is located at the front of the head, above the
feeling brain.  This brain contains the frontal lobes and the
prefrontal cortex, which sits in front of the frontal lobes.

Frontal Lobes
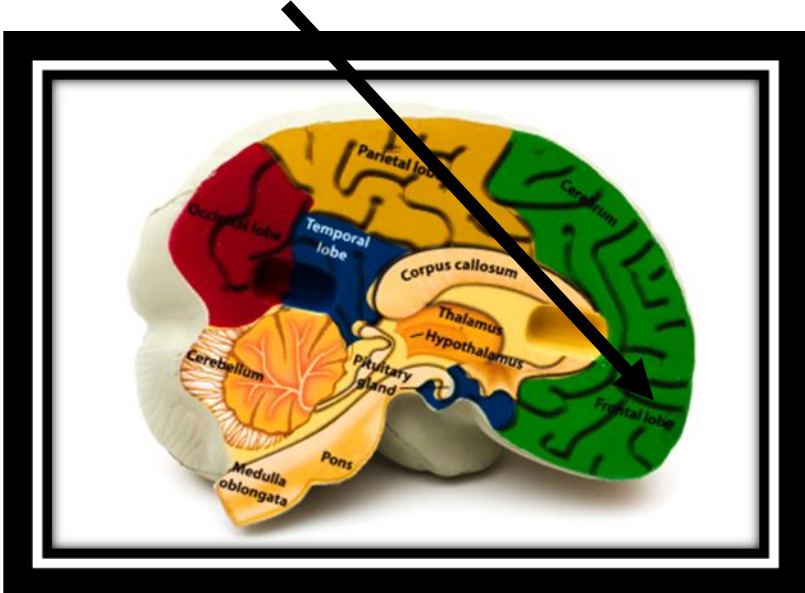
This brain has the capacity to think through situations and make choices based on decisions, not instincts or automatic patterns. In fact, it has the capacity to overrule instincts and automatic patterns.

This brain operates best under calm conditions. The calm allows this brain to do its job and prevents you from being at the mercy of the lower brain centers.

**The lower brain has a habit of hijacking the thinking brain. It does this very easily by convincing the thinking brain that survival is at stake. The thinking brain then rationalizes the instinctual and automatic reactivity of the lower brain centers as if the thinking brain were in charge. But, if the thinking brain is controlled by reactivity and stress then it is not in control.**

It is only an advantage to have the ability to think if you can use it. Taking leadership in your life is based on your ability to use your thinking brain to navigate yourself through relationship obstacles and make a plan of action toward the achievement of goals.

## 6.2   THE LEFT PREFRONTAL CORTEX

The left prefrontal cortex is especially important for leadership and change. This part of the brain controls those functions needed to take leadership in your life. It

inhibits impulses from the amygdala. It is known as the "executive" brain (Steinke, 2006).

The following are some of the characteristics controlled by the left prefrontal cortex that are important for leadership (based on Steinke, 2006).

**Empathy for others:** The ability to see beyond oneself and one's needs and have compassion for others.

**Observation:** The ability to learn from experience, see patterns, and be conscious about choices in life.

**Imagination:** The ability to imagine many possibilities, have choice in thinking and action, and to think "outside the box."

**Think critically:** The ability to problem solve and use principles to lead actions.

**Regulate emotions:** The ability to calm oneself, have self control, and reduce the activation of the lower brain's reactivity and alarms.

## 6.3   RIGHT BRAIN VERSUS LEFT BRAIN

The thinking brain is divided into two halves or hemispheres called the right brain and left brain.  Each brain has specific functions it controls.

**Left Brain**                    **Right Brain**
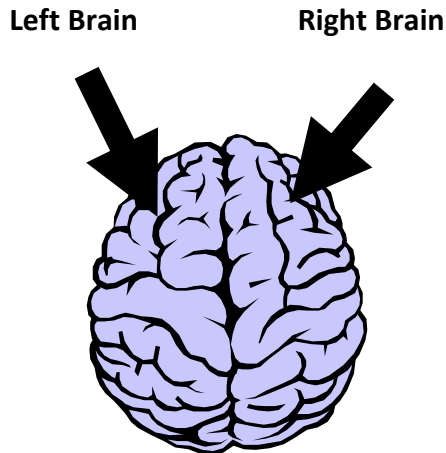
The right brain is responsible for taking in new information.  However, it is also responsible for managing negative emotion (Steinke, 2006).  Thus, new information and negative emotion are held together in the brain.  This represents an obstacle for leadership and change, because the right brain will often connect negative emotion to any new information or actions you try.  Thus, trying something new will often feel uncomfortable and negative.

The left brain is responsible for habitual behaviour, that is, behaviour that is comfortable and known.  It is also responsible for managing positive emotion (Steinke, 2006).  Thus, when you are doing what you always do and staying stuck in your life you will probably feel good about it.  This is the root of the comfort zone.  We continue to do

what feels comfortable because positive emotions are connected to it.

Are you beginning to see why creating change and leadership in your life are so difficult? Your brain structures are challenges you must overcome in this process.

Many people overcome this challenge every day. The important thing is to be aware of it.

**The good news is that when you risk getting uncomfortable and allow yourself to feel negative feelings, you step out of your comfort zone.**

Every time you get out of your comfort zone you expand it, because the left brain will start to recognize the new experience as familiar and attach positive feelings to the experience. Thus, if you want to expand the experiences in which you feel comfortable and in control then the solution is to first feel discomfort and to feel discomfort until it turns into comfort.

# PART THREE

# THE HOW OF RELATIONSHIP PRINCIPLES

### SESSION 7:  THINKING SYSTEMS

7.1     THE PROBLEM WITH TECHNIQUE
7.2     A DIFFERENT WAY OF THINKING
7.3     MORE ABOUT A SYSTEM
7.4     HIERARCHY

### SESSION 8:  AUTOMATIC BEHAVIOUR

8.1     AUTOMATIC PROCESSES
8.2     PERCEIVED CHOICE
8.3     NEURONETWORKS

### SESSION 9:  THE ROLE OF ANXIETY AND STRESS

9.1     ANXIETY AND STRESS
9.2     THINKING YOUR WAY OUT OF STRESS
9.3     OUTCOMES OF ANXIETY
9.4     STRESS & ANXIETY MANAGEMENT
9.5     EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL THREATS
9.6     FLOW OF ANXIETY

# SESSION 7
## THINKING SYSTEMS

Information about the relationship principles is presented in this section of the manual. The relationship principles represent the "how" of human interaction. They are the organizational features that characterize a system. They will show you how people react to each other in patterned and automatic ways.

**Thinking in terms of relationship principles simply means thinking about individuals within relationships more than only individual people or parts.**

When learning and applying the theory based on Dr. Bowen's work, it is important to think about every level within a system. That is, think about individuals, the greater system, the interaction of individuals within the system, and the interaction of individuals and the system. This is a focus on how things relate, rather than on their individual qualities or personalities.

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**We call this focus on individuals within relationships "thinking systems," and it is the premise of this manual and many other applications of Bowen theory.**

*From this point on, think of all information about the interactions of individuals within a system as relationship principles and the ability to think this way as "thinking systems."* We find that the more our clients can learn about relationships principles and apply them to their lives, the better they are able to create and maintain change and leadership in their lives.

## 7.1 THE PROBLEM WITH TECHNIQUE

Most of the information we personally have seen on leadership and change seems to be based on techniques. The problem we see with techniques is that they apply to only certain situations and aren't usually very capable of being generalized to other situations.

When one's change efforts are based on technique one will then require more and more technique to account for the various situations encountered. You will have to mix different techniques together in an attempt to come up with something that works in your particular situation. This tends to end up in a never ending search for more information.

**Example** For example, a manager attends a communication workshop and learns several communication *techniques*, such as asking a clarifying question. He tries out a clarifying question with Sally who responds exceptionally well to this technique, as she provides more information about her project and seems happy to have been asked. The manager then tries a clarifying question with Rick, who does not respond well. Rick seems to be offended by the question and left the manager's office abruptly. Rick then closed his office door and isolated himself for the day.

In this scenario, the technique worked on Sally, who felt heard and appreciated. Sally is more likely to be someone who enjoys close relationships with people. Rick, however perceived the question to be an invasion of privacy and a message that he wasn't able to do his job. Rick is likely to be someone who enjoys distance in relationships and needs his space. Thus, the same technique didn't work for both employees.

As Edwin Friedman, a major influence in systems thinking, has written, people get caught in equating the amounts of information and technique they have with knowledge and skills. This endless search for more information tends to leave one feeling constantly inadequate and in the position of needing more information (Friedman, 2007).

The use of techniques when trying to implement leadership and change is limited.

**?**

**Have you felt inadequate by a perceived lack of information?  What did you do in response to this feeling of inadequacy?** _____

_____

_____

## 7.2   A DIFFERENT WAY OF THINKING

The relationship principles are not based on technique. Rather, they are ways of thinking about the nature of people and human behaviour.

The relationship principles are different from technique because they apply universally to all human relationships and behaviour.  While Dr. Bowen developed the principles based on his observation of the family, it has been found that these same principles apply to all repeatedly interacting groups of people.  They seem to apply to human nature in general, regardless of race, social class, gender, etc.

These principles provide a way of taking large amounts of information and placing the information into easy to understand categories.  It is possible to see through the useless web of information to get to the underlying processes behind the information.  It is these underlying

processes that are truly important.  This is the difference between content and process.

**Content refers to the information that comes at us.  It refers to the subject of arguments and the issues discussed.  Process refers to the underlying patterns and process behind the content.  It refers to the way something is said rather than what is actually said or the relationship between two people rather than the issues between them.**

The relationship principles focus on process rather than content, whereas most techniques focus on content rather than process.

**Example** **For example, a team leader had a problem with two staff who constantly argued.  She decided to bring the staff together for an attempt at "conflict resolution."  Although the two employees *said* the right things in the meeting to suggest resolution, their *nonverbal body language* gave a different impression, such as rolling of eyes, arms crossed, and harsh vocal tone.  What they *said* is an example of content.  The *nonverbal body language* is an example of process.  When content and process give mixed messages, it is almost always better to believe the process messages.**

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The relationship principles thus present a paradigm shift from a focus on using techniques to change self or others, towards a focus on one's own capacity to lead and be an influential presence with others.

Having a way to think about the patterns and automatic processes that occur in human relationships provides a way out of acting from automaticity and a way that can make real change a possibility. When you have of way of thinking about human behaviour you aren't as subject to reacting to it. Remember, the lower brain functions (i.e., fight, flight, freeze)!

## 7.3    MORE ABOUT A SYSTEM

**A system is a collection of two or more people who interact repeatedly. In a broader sense, a system is a collection of parts that makes a whole, where the whole becomes more than just a sum of its parts.**

Each system has its own characteristics and personality. However, all systems operate on the same principles.

The following compose a system:

- The workplace

- A marriage
- A family
- Friendships
- A city
- A nation
- A solar system
- The human body
- A cell within the human body

As you can see, a system can be as large as a solar system or as small as a body cell. The necessary ingredients for making a system are the interacting parts. This is because when parts interact with each other an organization begins to develop concerning their interaction.

A system begins to determine the functioning of the individual parts. A system can have a lot of power over how the individual parts relate to each other.

The individual parts begin to interact in patterned ways that are predictable and automatic within the system. The organization of the interaction is often below the level of awareness of any of the parts.

**Example** **As discussed earlier, the human body is an example of a system. Each organ is responsible for a specific task and the organs work together for the health of the whole body. The brain and the heart don't do the same work, but have different yet complementary roles. Without the heart, the brain wouldn't survive and vice versa. Also, if one organ is not functioning, then other**

**organs will have to increase their activity in order to compensate.**

Within human systems, individual people represent the parts.  Each person in the system begins to influence all others in terms of feelings and behaviour and vice versa.  Each person's feelings and behaviour will become just a reflection of the relationships within the system.

No one person has the same position in the system.  Each individual maintains a separate role and functioning in order to keep the system running.  Repetition of position would be a waste of resources.

**Example** **This is the reason you never see siblings behaving exactly the same way.  Due to their positioning in the family they each have their own individual niche to fill.  In many ways, each sibling is born into a different family because the composition changes with the addition of each new person.**

**?** **In what ways are you different than your siblings? What was (is) your role in the family you grew up in?  Is this similar to your role at work? _____**

_____

_____

The position you hold in the system is extremely important to your functioning, as it determines what behaviour and success you are capable of within that system. Often times your position in the system will enhance or limit your success.

**Example** **If you have a front line position of directly dealing with customers but have several layers of management on top of you, any attempts at change will be strongly influenced and/or squashed by those individuals above you in the hierarchy. You are not a "free agent" but are limited by your role in the company.**

**?** **In what ways can you see that your position in your family or workplace has enhanced or limited your ability to achieve change?** _____

_____

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It is for this reason that the leader's position is so important. The leader has the position of being in contact with each person in the system and having influence over every position. By virtue of this role, the leader has the unique ability to influence the range of functioning of all other people in the system and all positions.

Also, the leader is less influenced by those below him or her and is more of a "free agent," able to create change and success with less limitation.

## 7.4 HIERARCHY

Leadership can be thought of in two different ways.

**The *first kind of leadership* concerns one's individual life course. That is, becoming aware of your dreams, working towards their achievement, and navigating the relationships that influence the potential achievement of your dreams.**

This kind of leadership has no bearing on the position you play in your system. Every position or person in every system can take a leadership role of sorts. Leadership of this type involves personal and relational awareness and action steps to take control over the direction of change in one's life.

**The *second kind of leadership* involves the hierarchy within a system. Every system has a hierarchy of parts and their interactions. The leader is at the top of the hierarchy.**

Just think of your workplace. You probably have a person in a management position who also may have a person above him or her in a higher management position, until you reach the president or CEO of the company who is at the top of the hierarchy.

It is the person at the top of the hierarchy who has the most power over all other positions and people within the system. The second from the top usually has the next greatest power and so on.

**What is the hierarchy at your workplace?**

_____

_____

_____

You probably have people above you and below you in the hierarchy of your workplace. It is usually those people who are at the bottom of the workplace hierarchy whose range of functioning is the most limited by the system.

**?** **Where do you fit in the hierarchy of your workplace and how might this be influencing your ability to create change and success?** _____

_____

_____

Both kinds of leadership are important to be aware of when thinking about systems and relationship principles. It is important to think about how you are influenced by the leadership in your workplace or how you influence others if you hold a leadership position. Also, it is important to think about your own leadership position in the life story you are creating.

**?** **How are you influenced by the leadership in your workplace?** _____

_____

_____

**?** **How are you creating a leadership position in your own life, regardless of the hierarchy of your workplace?**_____

_____

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# SESSION 8
## AUTOMATIC BEHAVIOUR

Patterns and automatic behaviour are mostly based on the functions of the lower brain centers.  They are based on the togetherness force discussed above, driven by anxiety, and can produce very reactive behaviour.

Gaining some awareness of these patterns and automatic behaviour can be extremely useful for navigating yourself more purposefully and successfully in life.

## 8.1  AUTOMATIC PROCESSES

**Automatic processes refer to feelings and behaviour that originate and are driven by the lower brain centers of the instinctual brain and feeling brain. Automatic processes are also known as "emotional process."**

Thinking through all of our feelings and actions would become exhausting and probably impossible.  The automatic processes save us from having to use energy to think through everything.  They enable people to respond quickly when that is needed.  They also allow us to not have to pay attention to every detail of our environment.

One of the important jobs of the lower brain centers is to pay attention to the environment and provide a fast response.

Because they are based on the hardwiring of the human brain, automatic processes extend beyond personality profiles, race, and gender.  They influence every human, no matter who they are or where they are from.

Two types of experiences influence what kind and degree of automatic response will present itself in a situation. These are:

1.  Early learning experiences
2.  Intense emotional experiences

*Early learning experiences* are created in our formative years with our parents or caregivers.  Behaviour is modelled from others or formed through reaction to others and is then repeated over time.  This repetition seems to create dominant neural pathways in the brain that are easily accessed over time.

**Example** **For example, Ann's mother always did Ann's cleaning when she was growing up.  Ann never learned how to do her own cleaning and struggled with mess as an adult.  The dominant pathways concerning cleaning in Ann's brain were formed *in reaction to* her mother's overfunctioning for her in this area.**

**?** **Give an example of an early experience or modeling by a parent that you have repeated throughout your life?** _____

_____

_____

*Intense emotional experiences* are so influential that they also seem to rewire the brain to create dominant neural pathways. Intense emotional experiences alert the brain that it needs to protect itself in certain situations – situations that are similar to the original intense experience.

Not only can experiences that are very emotionally intense rewire the brain and create automatic responses, but so also can stressful experiences such as embarrassment or failing something of significance, such as an important exam. Intense experiences that actually involve physical injury or the threat of physical injury also have the capacity to rewire the brain and create automatic responses for the future.

**Example** **For example, Roger played goal for his hockey team. During a game two years ago he let a goal through that allowed the other team to win a championship. Ever since that game Roger has frozen in situations similar to that experience to the extent that he often has to be benched due to his inability to focus.**

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**?** **What are examples of emotionally intense experiences or physically traumatic experiences in your past that may have rewired your brain to respond automatically to something that resembles these original experiences?** _____

_____

_____

## 8.2   PERCEIVED CHOICE

One of the important things to remember about automatic reactions is that we usually don't perceive choice over them.  We usually don't see that there is always a range of behaviour to choose from in a given situation.

Automatic reactions then serve to *limit* and *restrict* our range of behaviour to only that produced by the lower brain centers.

As mentioned above, we probably wouldn't want to have to choose all our behaviour throughout the day, as that would become overwhelming.  However, the ability to choose behaviour when we want to be able to respond differently is a very useful skill to have.

**Example** **For example, growing up Tim experienced disagreements in his family as highly conflictual. As an adult he avoided disagreements because he feared the fighting that he thought would be involved.**

**He realized that all disagreements don't have to end in conflict, but can be a chance to solve problems and create win/win situations. In this way Tim saw choice in his behaviour, rather than the same old patterns replayed.**

**?**

**Give an example of something over which you previously saw no choice, but that you do see choice over now?** _____

_____
_____

People get the same results again and again in their lives because they keep making the same choices again and again. If you were to change your choices then you would also change your results.

**The ability to create different outcomes in your life is a characteristic of leadership.  There is great freedom when we can recognize that we have choice over circumstances where we previously saw none.**

## 8.3   NEURONETWORKS

The brain is a system itself and is thus composed of a web of interconnected networks.  Some neuronetworks are more dominant than others due to their constant usage.  These dominant networks create some of the automatic reactions discussed above.

Changing neuronetworks clears the ways for more awareness of choice and different outcomes.  There are several ways of changing the neuronetworks.  The following are two ways for this to occur.

*One way to change these networks* is to go back into one's family of origin and purposefully change one's typical automatic behaviour.  It takes purposeful intention to respond differently with one's family.  In our coaching practice, we help our clients to make decisions about how to behave differently in their families in order to create lasting change.

**Example** **For example, if Ann from a previous example could learn to be clean and do her own laundry *and* go back to visit her mother with these new skills, she may change her neuronetworks concerning her**

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**underfunctioning. She would have to adamantly not allow her mother to do her laundry for her, but rather consistently show herself and her mother than she is competent.**

Over time this would likely change the neuronetworks so that more choice and different outcomes would be much easier to achieve, as one would have changed the dominant neuronetworks to be less dominant and less automatic.

*A second way to change these networks* is to work on automatic reactions with an intervention called EMDR. EMDR stands for Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing. This intervention works at deep levels of the brain to actually change neuronetworks and clear unwanted behaviour and reactions.

We use EMDR in our coaching practice and have seen incredible and lasting emotional and behavioural changes in our clients.

**Example** **For example, Jerry experienced a physical assault in his childhood by neighbourhood bullies that left him with broken bones. As an adult Jerry learned to stay away from people as a protection mechanism. He is known as a loner at work. After processing the physical assault with EMDR, he is now able to have closer relationships with others and has become more involved in work life. He no longer needs his protection mechanism because he no longer feels the need to protect himself from people.**

# Session 9
## The Role of Anxiety & Stress

**Learning to "think systems" involves learning to think about automatic processes.**

In order to understand automatic reactions even further one must understand the role of anxiety. Anxiety drives all automatic reactions to a greater or lesser degree.

## 9.1 Anxiety and Stress

**Anxiety is an expression of the survival instinct. Anxiety originates in the amygdala when it perceives a threat in the environment.**

A long time ago a threat may have been running into a tiger in the jungle. In that case it would be necessary to react automatically and quickly in order to survive. We need a system that will automatically protect us and assist us in our survival.

These days threats are less likely to be dangerous animals that want to have us for their dinner and more likely to be

interactions with people in our systems.  It is the interactions themselves that create the stress.

All **threats and stress are relational to some degree.**

When the amygdala and other lower brain centers perceive threat, they are perceiving something in the environment.  This something is almost always within the context of a relationship, whether it is a relationship with a tiger or with one's co-workers.

**Example** **For example, a coworker has a difficult day and debriefs her frustration with you.  From this interaction, you begin to feel anxious, frustrated, and overwhelmed.  Your coworker has effectively given you the anxiety through the relationship.  You feel worse, but your coworker likely feels better because she has given her emotion to you to manage.**

Most threats we face these days are not actually life threatening.  However, we only have one brain to use and this brain has only one set of functions.  That means we will react to a co-worker who threatens to takes up our precious time relating the storyline of their favourite TV

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show the same way we would if they had a spear in their hands.

Typical anxiety reactions in the body include the following:

- Sweating
- Tingling in the arms or legs
- Racing heartbeat
- Clenched fists

If you notice yourself experiencing the above, it is a sign that you are experiencing anxiety. For many people the physical symptoms of anxiety are their first clue that they are becoming activated.

**?**   **What physical reactions do you usually experience that may be signs of heightened anxiety?**

_____

_____

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This is important information because it indicates that *your lower brain centers are taking over*. If you can figure out when your lower brain centers are beginning to hijack the functions of the thinking brain you can work to calm yourself to prevent this from happening.

As mentioned above, aside from the physical signs of anxiety there are three typical reactions to threats.

They are:

- Fight
- Flight
- Freeze

The body's reaction to stress is to *do* something. Fight, flight, and freeze are ways of doing something for protection and to confront the threatening situation. Just as it is uncomfortable to experience anxiety, it is also uncomfortable to experience fight, flight, freeze reactions.

These reactions present a very limited range of behaviour. If all we are trying to do is survive then they work just fine, but if we are trying to negotiate the finer points of a business deal then they may not be suitable for the job.

To the lower brain centers, anything that may change homeostasis is perceived as a threat. In a work situation good ideas that push the progression of business may be perceived as a threat.

**Example** **Jake spent hours developing a plan to get his agency making money with his new idea. However, when he presented his idea to his coworkers they rejected it before he had even provided all the information. He couldn't understand how they could disagree with his idea when it was exactly what the agency needed to remain viable.**

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An anxiety reaction to a good idea may be to "fight" the ideas by disagreeing with them and literally "stay safe." However, staying safe often leads to poor productivity and limited business results.  Again, the comfort zone of homeostasis presents problems if change is what you are after.

## 9.2   THINKING YOUR WAY OUT OF STRESS

There is a difference between thinking thoughts driven by anxiety and actually thinking about one's anxiety.  People often believe that the "thinking" they do is helpful for solving the source of the stress, but this is often anxiety driven thinking from the lower brain centers.

**When the lower brain centers are in control of thinking, the thoughts usually loop round and round in one's head and never really achieve any kind of solution.  Usually the result of this "anxious thinking" is to get more and more anxious.**

It is useful to think about stress, but be careful that you are actually thinking productively and calmly rather than anxiously.  Calm thinking tends to help the situation, whereas anxious thinking tends to make the situation worse.

**Example** **For example, when you awaken at night "thinking" about work what you are likely doing more so than thinking is worrying, creating the worst scenario in your head, feeling physically activated, etc. These are functions of the lower brain, NOT the thinking brain.**

## 9.3 OUTCOMES OF ANXIETY

Anxiety activates and is activated by the lower brain centers and as a result prevents the full use of the thinking brain from taking place. Anxiety infects the brain so that the entire brain is hijacked from many activities. When the thinking brain isn't able to work to its capacity, mental skills begin to decline.

The following are a list of the outcomes of anxiety infecting the brain.

1. **Decreased capacity to learn**
   Anxious people have difficulty learning new information.

   It may seem to make sense that when someone doesn't understand something the best thing would be to teach them. In fact, this is often what happens in anxious situations. Some good meaning member of the system may try to instil knowledge in another to help the situation. However, anxious people don't learn very well, so efforts at teaching anxious others usually fail miserably and tend to frustrate everyone involved.

## 2. Poor concentration

The ability to concentrate is located within the thinking brain. When anxiety blocks the functioning of the thinking brain people simply aren't able to access this ability.

Blocked concentration caused by heightened anxiety often creates even more anxiety. Many people with mental health problems complain of poor concentration. This is often the result of their lower brain centers taking over their thinking brain, regardless of the diagnosis, and blocking the thinking brain's abilities.

## 3. Demand for certainty

When anxious, people tend to want certainty from others and in life. This presents a difficulty because most things in life are not certain. We don't know with 100% certainty that a new business proposal will actually work or that the sun will rise tomorrow for that matter.

Anxious people are in survival mode and as a result want assurance that they will survive the situation. If they could just get themselves calmer they would be able to more easily tolerate the inevitable uncertainty that we all experience.

## 4. Either/or thinking

The thinking brain is capable of thinking in terms of "both/and," meaning it can perceive the bigger picture and see a variety of possibilities that can coexist together.

When anxious, the brain loses the ability to see the bigger picture. Rather, it resorts to an emotional form of thinking in terms of "either/or." This form of thinking perceives that only one possibility can exist at one time. Either an answer can be right or it can be wrong, or a proposal can completely work or completely not work.

5. **Polarization**
   This is an extension of the "either/or" thinking. Anxious people tend perceive issues and other people as completely on their side or completely not on their side. They will become stuck on one side of an issue and not budge to even hear the other side or consider the possibility that middle ground may exist.

   Polarization has less to do with the actual issue being discussed and more to do with the *anxiety flowing through people*. When using their thinking brain effectively most people can see compromise or alternative possibilities. But, the anxious brain can only see one side and people tend to stick to that one side as if it were a matter of life or death...because to the anxious brain it seems like it is a matter of life or death.

6. **Poor problem solving**
   Anxiety restricts one's ability to think about possibility and options. It restricts one's ability to use imagination.

   As a result, problem solving abilities are reduced. It is difficult to think about solutions when one's

brain is ultimately focused only on survival and threat response.

7. **Quick fix**
   Anxiety is uncomfortable.  People will make many attempts to reduce this discomfort as quickly as is possible.  This means that anxious people tend to want a problem or conflict to be fixed as quickly as possible.

   However, most "fixes" to problems or conflict that actually work in the long term take time to develop.  It is often necessary to persevere through the discomfort in order for a workable solution to appear.  Anxious people are typically not happy about waiting for anything.  This is the mentality of the quick fix.  They want answers NOW out of their heightened anxiety.

8. **Helplessness**
   Anxiety promotes a feeling of helplessness because one gets stuck in survival mode and begins to feel as if one will always be in that state.

   The lower brain centers perceive the "eternal now," meaning that they deceive the thinking brain into believing that one's current emotional state is all there is and all there will ever be.  Anxious people feel helpless in this situation because they simply cannot see the situation ever changing.  Directed change is a function of the thinking brain and cannot be seen when anxiety has overcome the brain.

## 9.4 STRESS & ANXIETY MANAGEMENT

Stress can be thought of as another word for anxiety. They refer to pretty much the same thing.  The only difference is that stress is something people are typically aware of, whereas anxiety is something that is often below the level of awareness.

**Stress is simply anxiety that has come into one's awareness.**

In this manual, we refer to stress and anxiety interchangeably.

Most people recognize that stress and anxiety reduce productivity and good business results.  It is also becoming more visible how detrimental stress is on health.  The long-term effects of stress have been linked to illnesses such as depression, heart disease, and even cancer.

When the body experiences frequent stress it is a good idea to use stress management techniques to decrease one's susceptibility to illness that is connected to stress.

There are many methods of stress reduction. You will find breathing exercises and a progressive muscle relaxation exercise in your bonus materials.   Stress reduction may include the following:

- Exercise

- Hobbies
- Social resources
- Prayer
- Meditation

These strategies can be very helpful in calming one's lower brain centers so they are less likely to initiate and/or maintain control over the thinking brain.  Also, when the body is calm the lower brain is less likely to perceive threat.  In this way stress management is a strategy to prevent the lower brain centers from overtaking the higher brain.

Stress management, however, provides only temporary relief.  It doesn't actually take the stress away.  Stress management is really just a displacement of the anxiety (Miller, 2002).

## Example

- **A displacement of the "fight" reaction:   Hit a golf ball or punching bag instead of a customer**
- **A displacement of the "flight" reaction:  Escape into a fantasy world of computer games, television, or fictional novels**
- **A displacement of the "freeze" reaction:  Oversleep or sit in a rocking chair sipping tea for hours**

Stress management strategies can also be achieved by creating a chemical high in the body.  This can be done by

eating (i.e., those carbohydrates and chocolates), smoking, drinking alcohol, or medicating.  This type of stress management presents a competition to the stress chemicals within the body when the body is stressed and an attempt to block them out (Miller, 2002).

As useful as temporary measures can be, ultimately stress must be addressed at its source.  Otherwise it will continue to persist and cause problems.  It is possible to use stress management strategies to control the stress to some degree, but unless the source is addressed a great amount of energy will be spent on stress management or in experiencing the symptoms of stress, such as illness.

Systems thinking suggests that, to some degree, stress is always relational.  The spread of anxiety through relationships will almost always be at the source of the stress.  If you were to map out the anxiety far enough back you would likely see that you became stressed due to becoming infected by someone else.

The source of stress is always relational.  Thus, it must be addressed at the relational level before it will truly disappear.

**The genius of stress management strategies is that, because they calm the lower brain centers, they provide a window of opportunity to think about the source of the stress and ways to solve it.**

If strategies for stress management are not used to allow one's thinking brain to plan and act, then they can actually become problems themselves (Miller, 2002). Strategies for stress management can become patterns of displacement or competition for stress but with no actual change occurring. If no change occurs then these strategies become just another part of homeostasis, or keeping things the same.

**Example** **Rob the IT guy gets stressed due to too much conflict at work, takes a vacation and feels better, returns to work, gets stressed, meditates and feels better, returns to work, gets stressed, joins a golf club and feels better, returns to work, gets stressed, etc. If there is no break in the pattern, then stress management strategies are just part of the problem of staying stuck in the systems dynamics.**

## 9.5   EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL THREATS

Situations that the lower brain centers consider to be threatening come in many forms. The two main categories of threats are external and internal threats (Miller, 2002).

Think of external and internal threats as an opportunity to gain awareness of and navigate yourself.

Both external and internal threats can cause the amygdala to signal an alarm to the rest of the body. The following

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are some of the typical threats found in the business world.

1. External Threats in Business
   - Competition from other sources
   - A market or global recession
   - Changing customer demands
   - A public disaster

External threats are usually named by leaders and others and are usually somewhat understood by staff. They create stress that is at the level of conscious awareness. When one is stressed about these types of threats, one is clear why he or she is stressed.

2. Internal Threats in Business
   - Poor communication
   - A change in management
   - Abstract job description
   - Intrusive coworkers

Internal threats usually are not named and not understood as well as external threats. When these threats are not clearly articulated, they tend to affect all members at an instinctual/automatic level. When you don't know from where the threat is coming you don't know how to prepare for it or manage it.

To assess any kind of threat, rational thought is required. However, when the amygdala has perceived a threat and the lower brain centers have taken over the entire brain with anxiety-focused thinking, the outcome is heightened anxiety both within self and within the whole system.

## 9.6 FLOW OF ANXIETY

**Anxiety is contagious. It is like a cold virus that can sweep across a group of people and infect them all. Anxiety has the ability to spread very quickly and without the awareness of what is happening.**

The infectious nature of anxiety has roots in survival instincts. Have you ever watched a nature channel and witnessed an entire heard suddenly stop and flee when one of its members has seen a predator?

This spread of anxiety has many benefits for survival. For example, if someone walked into your office with a gun you would want to be informed right away. The spread of anxiety within a system is nature's method of keeping you informed.

Most threats we face these days are not survival oriented. But, because the brain and body have only one set of reactions to use, all threats are survival focused.

To gain a greater ability to create change and be a leader in your own life and at work, you must gain insight into anxiety, so you won't be at its whim nearly as often or for as long.

One of the most important aspects of anxiety to understand is that there is a flow to it within a system. Remember, anxiety is uncomfortable. So people will

attempt to get rid of it as quickly as possible.  This is accomplished by transferring the anxiety to someone else.

**Anxiety is usually experienced and transferred at a level that is below awareness.  People are usually not aware they feel anxiety or transfer it at all.  It is an instinctual activity driven by the lower brain centers.**

It is difficult to see the transference of anxiety unless you observe the system very carefully.  An important skill to hone is the ability to observe the flow of anxiety within a system.  There will be a flow of anxiety within the workplace, within a country, and within a family.  The flow of anxiety is something we teach to our coaching clients and find it is extremely valuable to assist in their change efforts and leadership capabilities.

If anxiety isn't stopped it will continue in a system until something breaks.  Either someone gets ill, quits, or productivity is halted due to conflict, "personality differences," etc.

The only way to stop or change the flow of anxiety is by changing your own behaviour.  You are an important piece to all the systems of which you are a part. You have the ability to change the flow of anxiety if you are aware of what is happening and take clear thought out action.

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*The way to stop the flow of anxiety is to catch it when it is passed to you, but* **to not pass it on to the next person. Rather, intentionally calm yourself and use that time to think through the situation. When you do this you also enable the next person to think more calmly because they have not become infected by the anxiety. This can have the outcome of calming the entire system.**

If you perceive the problem as being someone else's responsibility then you have given up control. Your only solution becomes trying to control the other's behaviour. You can never achieve a solution this way because you can't control others' behaviour. It is far more helpful to take a leadership role yourself and stop the anxiety when it comes to you rather than becoming an emotional domino.

**Example** **For example, during a work meeting the team leader is confronted with disagreements from staff about the implementation of a new form. Instead of getting caught up in the emotion, he decides to stay calm, talk about the facts, and not take the attacks personally.**

When the anxiety is passed to you, you can hold on to it rather than passing it to the next person. You can calm

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yourself and think through the situation.  Then you can initiate action based on your calm thinking in order to change the situation.

# PART FOUR
# THE FIVE PATTERNS OF RELATIONSHIP PRINCIPLES

## SESSION 10: TRIANGLES

## SESSION 11: UNDERFUNCTIONING AND OVERFUNCTIONING

## SESSION 12: DISTANCE AND PURSUIT

## SESSION 13: CONFLICT

## SESSION 14:  CUTOFF

## SESSION 15:  THE PROCESS OF SYSTEMS

# SESSION 10
## TRIANGLES

The flow of anxiety is a natural phenomenon.  There are predictable ways in which anxiety flows and is spread.  The predictable ways include five patterns that occur in relationships.  The purpose of each of the patterns is to dilute and manage anxiety or stress.  These predictable processes are automatic and occur without thought.  That is the reason that most people do not even recognize they exist and are not aware when they are caught in them.

**The flow of anxiety usually occurs within five patterns of automatic behaviour.  Each pattern is reciprocal because the patterns require several people to play complementary roles.  These roles are needed for the patterns to be able to initiate and continue.**

Increasing your awareness of these patterns can lead to more choice about how to navigate yourself within them and how to stop the different roles you typically play.  Doing this will increase opportunity for change within yourself and your workplace or other systems.  It will increase your chances of creating the life you truly want rather than being at the whim of the automatic forces in your life.

# 10.1 TRIANGLES

Triangles are one of the most common patterns for diluting stress and are found everywhere.  They are not good or bad, they exist to manage anxiety.

A triangle is formed when two people cannot manage the stress or anxiety between them.  They will draw in a third person to spread the stress around more and help themselves feel less uncomfortable.

***Two sides*** *draw in a* ***third*** *to reduce their relational anxiety.*
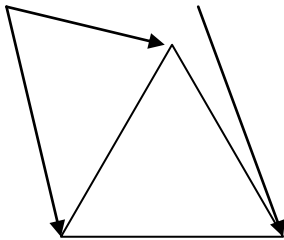
Triangles are not only formed with people, but can also be formed with issues and symptoms.  Each person, issue, or symptom is referred to as a "side" of the triangle.

A triangle can be formed in the following ways:

Tension between two people passes an invisible emotional threshold and then:

- Two people draw in a third person
- Two people draw in an issue (i.e., politics, religion, workplace policy)
- Two people draw in a symptom (i.e., one of them becomes ill, abuses alcohol, becomes anorexic)
- One person and an issue or symptom draw in another person

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Triangles are used to create whatever situation is needed at the time to reduce stress. They may decrease togetherness, they may create more togetherness, or they may manage conflict. They will provide relief as is needed. However, triangles shift quickly due to changing anxiety. A triangle that at one time provided relief may turn to cause more problems in the future.

There are three reciprocal roles within a triangle.

**Anxiety Generator**

**Anxiety Amplifier**                    **Anxiety Diffuser**
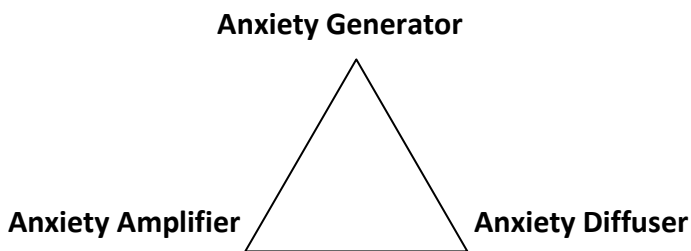
1. **The anxiety generator**
   This is the side of the triangle that is the most anxious initially. This person will provide the anxiety to circulate within the triangle.

2. **The anxiety amplifier**
   This is the side of the triangle that catches the anxiety introduced by the anxiety generator. This side will increase the magnitude of the anxiety and spread it around almost as if it were directing the anxiety into a megaphone for all to hear.

3. **The anxiety diffuser**
   This is the side of the triangle that absorbs the anxiety generated and amplified by the first two. The job of this side is to reduce and sooth the

anxiety to help the first two feel better.  The result is usually that the anxiety diffuser takes on the majority of the anxiety in the triangle and ends up with the problems.  The anxiety diffuser is the side of the triangle that is most likely to have symptoms.  This person may get ill or dysfunction in some way as a result of the heightened anxiety they experience.  We refer to this person as the "anxiety sponge" because they act like a sponge by soaking up the anxiety in the triangle.

**Example** **Two coworkers become infected by the stress created by layoffs in the company.  They draw in a third co-worker to release their worry about the situation, through talk at their afternoon break time.  The third co-worker then develops migraines and a negative outlook toward work.**

**?** **Which role in a triangle do you most often play?**

**Are you the anxiety generator** _____

**Are you the anxiety amplifier** _____

**Or, are you the anxiety diffuser** _____

Each triangle will have two sides that are "on the inside" and one side that is "on the outside."  The two on the

inside feel a comfortable togetherness when anxiety is low, while the one on the outside may feel left out. When anxiety is high, the two on the inside often feel an uncomfortable togetherness, while the one on the outside may feel a comfortable distance.

These roles shift over time. A person who was at one time on the inside may shift to the outside while the outside person may shift to an inside position. The shifts are usually caused by a change in the level of anxiety in the system.

## Example    Interlocking Triangles
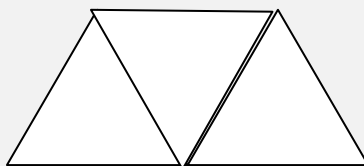


All relational systems are composed not only of individual triangles but of interlocking triangles. The amount of triangles increases fast as the number of people within a system increases.

- 3 people = 1 potential triangle
- 4 people = 4 potential triangles
- 5 people = 8 potential triangles

Not all of these potential triangles will become active. Most often a system is composed of many latent or inactive interlocking triangles. Only some of the triangles become activated due to a heightened level of anxiety within the system. The more anxiety there is in a system, the more triangles that will be activated in order to spread out the anxiety.

**Example** **For example, a new work policy has many people in the office upset and angry at management. This serves to activate the triangles between people in one department, between the department staff and the receptionist, between the department staff and customers, between the department staff and management, and between the staff and their families.**

Like all of the following relationship patterns, triangle formation is a temporary solution for the anxiety. However, because people are most often unaware of their participation in triangles, triangles usually continue indefinitely.

The continuous use of triangles actually makes the problem causing the anxiety and the anxiety itself worse over time.

**As the anxiety continues to spread around the interlocking triangles it becomes diluted enough to**

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**stop members from finding the source of the anxiety and fixing the problem at its source. Fixing the problem at its source is of course the only thing that would stop or greatly reduce the anxiety and the need for creating triangles.**

Over time, taking the same role in a dominant triangle can seem to become a part of one's personality. For example, the anxiety generator may be perceived as an argumentative personality. The anxiety amplifier may be perceived as a gossip in the office. The anxiety diffuser may be perceived as the "nice" person who is constantly having problems in his or her life.

**?**

**What are the main triangles at work in which you are a part? What role do you play in each triangle?**

**Triangle members      Your role**

**1.** _____

_____

**2.** _____

_____

**3.** _____

_____

**4.** _____

_____

**5.** _____

_____

## 10.2 MEDIATION

Many companies use mediation to try to reduce difficulties.  Mediation is usually an attempt to create peace where conflict or conscious stress abounds.  All that mediation really accomplishes is the creation of triangle.  It simply adds another triangle to the system.  Usually the mediator is on the outside of the triangle.  This doesn't necessarily stop the anxiety at its source, unless the mediator is skilled at observing emotional process.

Finding a consultant who is trained to "think systems" can be far more helpful than simply bringing in a mediator who will often become caught up in the anxiety of the system.  Someone who is trained in systems thinking can observe the emotional process of the system and leverage his or her involvement in the triangles to create change in the system.  There is more information about leverage below.

**?**    **Have you ever been a part of a mediation attempt?  Did the mediation work to create change or just keep things stuck?  What caused it to result in this way?** _____

_____

_____

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# 10.3 DETRIANGLING

While "triangling" is the term used to describe the process of getting drawn into a triangle, "detriangling" is the term used to describe the process of getting out of a triangle or leveraging oneself within a triangle to create change.

The most important piece to managing office politics is to learn how to navigate oneself in triangles.  When you learn how to do this it is easier to detriangle when you want to.

To be able to manage yourself and detriangle you must first learn to decrease your own anxiety so you can observe the triangle and think of a plan to get out of it.  Or, think of a plan to leverage the triangle towards change.

There are five main ingredients to detriangling.  They are:

1.  Ask yourself why the triangle was activated initially.  What caused the stress in the first place?  This will give you an idea of how to direct your efforts at the source of the stress and reduce the stress itself so that the triangle is less intense.

2.  Observe the facts of the situation.  Try to get as objective as possible about the situation, the people involved, and your own participation.

3.  Have a direct relationship with each of the other two people in the triangle.  Relate to each one face to face, rather than going through one person to

get to the other.  When you communicate directly, you lessen your involvement in the triangle and create one to one relationships.

4.  Relate to the other two people in the triangle, but don't attempt to solve their conflict.  The drive to decrease the conflict or problems between two other people arises out of the anxiety it creates within you.  That is how you get caught in the triangle in the first place, because you get infected with anxiety.  The way other people feel is their business.  You don't have to take it on yourself or attempt to fix it.

5.  It is possible to leverage the triangle towards change by changing yourself *while in connection* with each person in the triangle.  In this way you alter the homeostasis of the triangle and force it to change.  When you stay in contact with each person in the triangle, you prevent the triangling process from happening and force direct communication.

**?**
**What part of detriangling might help you to get out of your main triangles?**  _____

_____

_____


It is difficult to take leadership over your life when you are caught in intense triangles.  Triangles have the power to

influence behavior and create great emotional intensity. It is much easier to take leadership when you are less involved in triangles and more connected on an individual level to each person in the system. That way you have power over the triangle rather than the triangle having power over you.

It is not realistic to think that you can get out of every triangle. Triangles are a fact of life. They exist everywhere you look. But, the ability to be more aware of the major triangles in your life can greatly help you to take more leadership over yourself without getting caught in relational dynamics.

# Session 11
## Overfunctioning & Underfunctioning

The next pattern used to dilute and manage anxiety is called overfunctioning and underfunctioning reciprocity. It is a reciprocal relationship because when you find an overfunctioner you will always find an underfunctioner close by and vice versa.

It is drawn with one person overtop of the other.

Overfunctioning
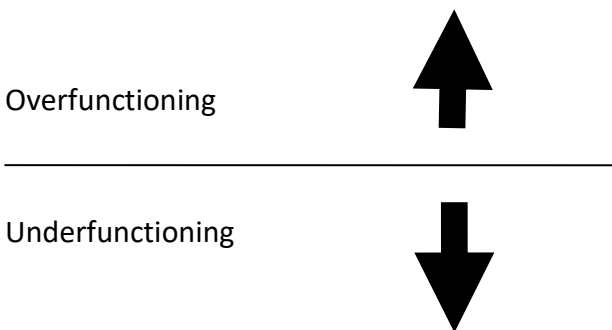
Underfunctioning

## 11.1 Overfunctioning

The person in the role of the overfunctioner tends to look like he or she is very competent and successful. The person in this role gets drawn into the anxiety of the system by feeling overly responsible for others. They see what should be done and, due to heightened anxiety, they perceive that they are the only ones who can accomplish

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the task.  When these people are anxious they will jump in and take over.

There is often magical thinking attached to this position, where the overfunctioner believes that if something bad happens it is their fault.  They will do their best to prevent something bad from happening, but this means that they have to be in control of everything and everyone.

Overfunctioners are often seen as the "golden" employees who take on many tasks and seem to make the boss's life easier.  Many people in management positions get drawn into the role of the overfunctioner because they feel responsible for the direction and productivity of the business.

Managers in this position often spend their day "putting out fires."  They are constantly getting triggered by other's anxiety and jumping in to fix the situation.  However, when you are putting out fires, you aren't making headway on long term goals or your own to-do list.

Overfunctioners tend to worry about others.  They worry about many aspects of work and take them on as their job, regardless of whether that job was actually assigned to them.  On the surface overfunctioners can be very appealing, especially in work situations.  Who wouldn't want someone in their company who takes responsibility for everything and gets things done?

However, there is a dark side to overfunctioning.  One problem is that overfunctioners tend to be so focused on everyone else that they neglect themselves.  They are often the ones who burnout and take stress leave.  They

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often have failing marriages because they are so focused on their work.

They may seem to be leaders but this is deceptive because overfunctioning is a pattern that is driven by the flow of anxiety.  These people typically have no real life direction within their own lives that is separate from the anxiety around them.

Another problem with overfunctioning is that there is a message given to others through the act of their overfunctioning.  The message is that the overfunctioner is smarter and more capable than the other.  After all they are constantly jumping in and helping the other.

The other person may perceive the "help" to mean that they aren't able to manage the situation or their job by themselves.  This is the way that an underfunctioner is born.  The underfunctioner will allow the overfunctioner to sweep in and take over because it seems that the overfunctioner knows better or is more capable.

**?**   **What or who triggers you to overfunction?**

_____

_____

_____

## 11.2 UNDERFUNCTIONING

People in the underfunctioning role appear to the untrained eye to be weak and not capable of their job tasks. After all they constantly "need" someone to help them. They are often perceived as the least capable employee and biggest drain on resources. They are often late for meetings, come unprepared, or seem unaware of deadlines.

Underfunctioners may believe that they are everything that others see in them too. They may believe they are not capable of success. They often roll over and let others take over for them.

They tend to seek advice, rather than expressing their opinion first and only then asking for feedback. They just assume that their opinion is not important and that they cannot help with a solution. They will automatically opt out of tasks and projects because they feel that they are not capable of success.

Like overfunctioning, underfunctioning is a pattern created by anxiety. The more anxious the system, the more the underfunctioner tends to underfunction.

This pattern is infectious. When one person overfunctions the other person tends to underfunction and vice versa. It is impossible to have an overfunctioner or underfunctioner in isolation.

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**?**

**What or who triggers you to underfunction?**

_____

_____

_____

**Example** **For example, a boss promotes an employee to a management position. The manager feels insecure about his ability to handle this role and as a result constantly emails his boss questions about this role. In effect, the boss has remained responsible for the manager's position and overfunctions for the manager just as the manager underfunctions in his role.**

## 11.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF OVERFUNCTIONING AND UNDERFUNCTIONING

**Overfunctioning and underfunctioning are styles of relating to others and patterns created to manage anxiety. They are not a true reflection of skill level or competence. However, it may seem this way to anyone observing this pattern in action.**

Overfunctioners typically do not notice that they are anxious. They usually feel like they are in control. Their

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stress becomes evident when they attempt to stop overfunctioning. Then the thought that other people and situations are beyond their control spikes their anxiety. However, this was the situation all along. Other people and their situations are always out of one's control. The overfunctioner just carries on as if it weren't true and that fantasy is what soothes their anxiety.

Underfunctioners typically know they are anxious. They feel anxious. They feel the stress of the situation. They may hold the belief that they are helpless to change the situation and at the mercy of the overfunctioner. They tend to believe that the overfunctioner is in some way saving them and they usually don't know what they would do without that person. Although they usually would do much better not being part of the pattern at all.

**Signs of overfunctioning** (Miller, 2002)

- Believing you can make other people feel good
- Believing you are responsible for other's feelings, thoughts, or actions
- Acting as if others are your therapy clients
- Thinking that you know what is best for another person
- Giving advice before it is asked
- Taking over without being asked

**Signs of underfunctioning** (Miller, 2002)

- Appearing unskilled and weak
- Appearing unmotivated
- Fearing rejection if you become too capable
- Waiting for others to make decisions for you
- Waiting for others to take initiative

- Asking for advice before first mentioning your own opinion
- Not considering your own needs by allowing others to have things their way
- Believing others are responsible for your feelings

## 11.4 HOW TO STOP OVERFUNCTIONING AND UNDERFUNCTIONING

Patterns are only able to continue when both people play their role. The only way to stop this pattern is to stop your part of the pattern. You must take initiative and be the leader for change. It is impossible to change another person. Waiting for another person to change first is usually futile.

As the overfunctioning and underfunctioning pattern is a way of managing anxiety, it provides temporary relief from anxiety. This pattern is continually used because it does help with the situation temporarily. Overtime this pattern becomes part of a comfortable homeostasis. When attempting to change your position in this pattern you are faced with trying to shift the homeostasis within the system.

Both you and the other person will likely feel uncomfortable at first with the change. The other person may intensify their behaviour at first in an attempt to re-establish homeostasis. Thus, the overfunctioner may become even more controlling or the underfunctioner may become even more helpless. These are examples of the change back requests discussed earlier.

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If change efforts are maintained even with the intensifying of the other's behaviour, then real change can emerge.  As a result of you changing your behaviour, the other must change in response.

The only way to do this is to focus on yourself and your behaviour.  Don't get pulled off track by focusing on what the other person is doing.

Eventually underfunctioners realize they are not so dumb and helpless, while overfunctioners become less controlling and more present in their own lives.

## 11.5  Reciprocal Nature of the Pattern

It is possible for people to become either underfunctioners or overfunctioners depending on what others in their system are doing.

**Example** **At home Susan may underfunction in response to her husband's overfunctioning, but at work she may overfunction in response to her employees underfunctioning.**

These roles are interchangeable.  It is common to see people shift back and forth between these two roles frequently.  Although one role is usually more dominant and considered to be part of one's "personality."  It is possible to see beyond this pattern towards more

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competent and independent people when anxiety levels decrease.

**?**

 **Do you have a tendency to overfunction or underfunction at work or at home?  If so, who plays the complementary role?** _____

_____

_____

# SESSION 12
## DISTANCE & PURSUIT

The third pattern used to dilute and manage anxiety is that of distance and pursuit.  This pattern can be reciprocal, as one person takes the role of the distancer and the other person takes the role of the pursuer.  This pattern can also involve two distancers rather than one distancer and one pursuer.

**Distance:**

**Other  Person**                    **You**

**Pursuit:**

**You**                    **Other Person**
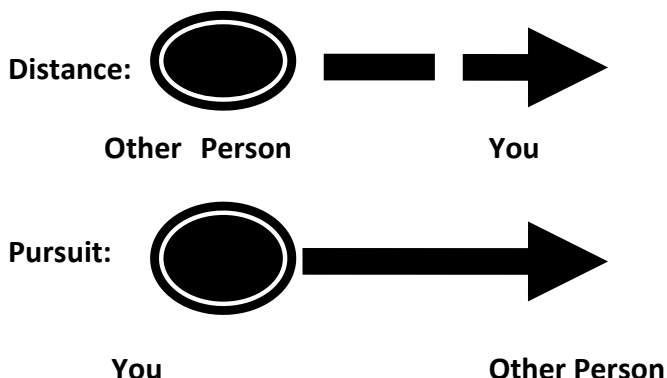
## 12.1  DISTANCE AND PURSUIT

All patterns involve some distancing as a means to manage the anxiety produced by too much togetherness.

Each of us is comfortable with a different degree of togetherness.  Based on early learning and individual physiology, each person will attempt to establish a certain level of togetherness in their homeostasis.

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Some people feel that there is too much togetherness and will distance themselves in an attempt to create less togetherness. These people tend to feel increased anxiety with too much togetherness and are called "distancers."

Distancers are often perceived by others as having a "fear of intimacy." This isn't accurate. What the distancer really fears is the possibility of losing him or herself in another person. They fear that too much togetherness may result in their destruction. This is anxiety driven thinking, but it compels people to distance and even leave relationships in which they could otherwise be very happy.

Some people feel that there is not enough togetherness and will pull themselves closer to another in an attempt to create more togetherness. These people tend to feel increased anxiety with less togetherness. These are the people who tend to take a pursuing role in a relationship and are called "pursuers."

Distancers manage anxiety by separating themselves from others, while pursuers manage anxiety by drawing themselves closer to others.

**?**
**What is your own comfortable level of togetherness (less or more)?** _____

_____

_____

Anxiety is raised when one is with others in a system who want different amounts of togetherness. When distancers aren't able to have their preferred level of distance, then their anxiety tends to spike. When pursuers aren't able to have their preferred level of togetherness, then their anxiety also tends to spike. Thus, distance and pursuit patterns are created by raised anxiety and also create raised anxiety (Miller, 2002).

**?**     **Do you tend to distance or pursue when you feel heightened anxiety?** _____

_____

_____

**?**     **Are there situations where you tend to distance but others where you tend to pursue?** _____

_____

_____

When two distancers are in a relationship together they can be content with the management of anxiety. They each do their own thing and maintain a fairly surface level relationship with each other.

When a distancer and a pursuer are in a relationship they usually swing from comfort to discomfort, depending on the level of anxiety.  When anxiety increases the distancer will attempt to distance and the pursuer will attempt to get closer.  This results in a cat and mouse game of one person chasing the other indefinitely.

Sometimes the discomfort for the distancer becomes so great that he or she will distance and completely leave the relationship.  This results in cutoff, discussed below.

At times the discomfort for the pursuer becomes so great that he or she will distance and possibly end the relationship purely in reaction to his or her inability to get close to the other.

**Example**    **For example, the boss of a non-profit agency is passionate about her job and wants to share her enthusiasm with her employees.  However, her enthusiasm is perceived as pursuing by her employees, who in turn distance from her.  This pursuing becomes so intense that her agency becomes a revolving door of employees, as distancing has turned into cutoff for many staff.**

This pattern, like all the others, creates problems if it becomes solidified.  If the source of the anxiety that drives this pattern is not addressed, then this pattern may become the focus of the people involved, rather than finding a solution for the real problem.

It then becomes very difficult to resolve the situation because the real problem is masked by the pattern. The pattern itself makes people feel uncomfortable so they mistakenly believe that it is the real problem. If the real problem isn't addressed then this creates a situation that can only end in cutoff. *The real problem in almost every case is usually some form of a lack of responsibility of each person for his or her own life and future*.

**?**
**What triggers you to distance?** _____
_____
_____

**?**
**What triggers you to pursue?** _____
_____
_____

## 12.2  DISTANCE AT WORK

The workplace provides many situations for distancing behaviour. Workplace policies, projects, and ideas tend to promote togetherness, as everyone is expected to join in them. This promotion of togetherness itself may be

enough to increase anxiety among members and trigger a distancing response.

When people disagree with a new policy or idea but feel unable to voice their opinions, they may feel even more anxiety. They will tend to distance from the group to relieve the anxiety they feel from too much togetherness.

Signs that people are distancing:

- Blank faces
- Avoidance of eye contact
- General comments
- No comments

**People are less likely to distance if they feel they have the ability to speak their opinions. When people are allowed to have differences they feel less togetherness pressure and also less anxiety. People won't need to use patterns to manage anxiety if they don't feel anxiety.**

If you are the leader of the group, intentionally give others permission to speak their minds about conflicting ideas. This not only reduces people's need to distance, but also promotes problem solving.

Often leaders avoid asking for conflicting ideas because this increases their own anxiety. Most people don't like to be argued with or feel that they don't have the approval

of the group.  However, inviting others to share their true opinions with you is a key towards problem solving.

When inviting conflicting ideas, be aware of your own anxiety.  Make efforts to reduce your anxiety, such as deep breathing, positive self-talk, and muscle relaxation.

## 12.3  THE INFLUENCE OF JOB REQUIREMENTS

The distance and pursuit pattern can become confusing at work.  Some job descriptions require distance whereas some require more closeness with others.

For example, jobs that require some distance are:

- Desk jobs
- Accountanting
- Computer designing
- Engineering

Jobs that require closeness with others are:

- Sales jobs
- Cashiers
- Psychologists
- Teachers

Job positions themselves can create anxiety for people if they don't fit with their comfort level for togetherness.

**Example** **A teacher who tends to distance may find his or her job very uncomfortable and give as many individual work assignments to the class as possible to avoid contact with the students.**

**Conversely, an accountant who enjoys being around people may find his or her job anxiety producing and spend hours socializing with others on the phone or in person.**

Finding a job position that fits with one's own togetherness comfort level is an important task. Otherwise, the anxiety produced by the mismatch may interfere with job requirements, such as the teacher who gives as many in class homework periods as possible or the accountant who takes a 20 minute conversation break every hour.

**?** **How close a fit is your job description to your preferred level of togetherness?** _____

_____

_____

# SESSION 13
## CONFLICT

The fourth pattern used for diluting and managing anxiety is that of conflict.  This is the pattern that most people are aware of because it is the most obvious one.  Similar to the other patterns, the conflict pattern requires more than one person to maintain itself over time.
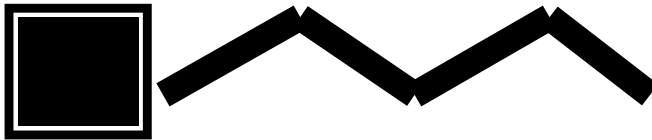
## 13.1  CONFLICT

**Conflict arises when people become anxious about a disagreement.  Conflict usually isn't about the issue being disagreed about.  Rather, conflict is about the emotion and anxiety created by disagreement about anything.**

When conflict arises, people tend to focus on emotions and personality, rather than issues.  This creates a polarization effect in the group.  People will violently oppose one another out of intense emotion and see no middle ground.

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Conflict, when it is not a pattern of binding anxiety, is a healthy characteristic within a business. Diversity of ideas in members provides better problem solving. Diversity prevents group think, the situation where everyone goes along with one idea and no other ideas arise.

The risk with conflict is that people will become polarized and distance from each other in an attempt to sooth their heightened anxiety. To make conflict a healthy experience it is necessary to remain connected with others, even in the conflict. Problems can only be worked on when people are in contact with each other.

**?** **When there is conflict at work, do you maintain healthy contact with others or disengage and distance from them?** _____

_____

_____

Conflict, as a pattern of managing anxiety, will often show up in the people who feel anxiety first. That is, the most anxious, dependant, and emotionally immature people are often involved in the explosion of conflict in the workplace or any group. These people aren't necessarily the people who actually have disagreements. Rather, they are the people who can handle disagreements in the system the least. These people are the most reactive to anxiety in the system and as a result need to bind the anxiety the most.

The people involved in the conflict pattern often hijack an entire office. They do this by not giving in to problem

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solving. They feel the anxiety in the system so acutely that their lower brain centers have taken over and they can no longer think rationally. Any thinking they do is likely to be anxiety driven. As discussed above, anxious people think in terms of either/or and have difficulty learning or accepting new information.

When these people won't give in, everyone else in the system tends to adapt to them in an attempt to reduce the conflict. However, the conflict itself isn't the real problem, rather it is the anxiety behind the conflict and the source of the anxiety that is the real problem.

People tend to focus on the conflict as the problem because it is often loud and unavoidable. This prevents the real problem from being addressed.

When others in the system adapt to the immature one, that person is allowed to control the direction of everyone. Essentially, the fate of the business is in their very incapable hands. These people are incapable because they are usually the most anxious and immature of the group and the least capable of creating change.

**?**

**How do the immature people in your workplace take over the group?** _____

_____

_____

One of the common attempts we see businesses make to address the perceived problem, the conflict, is to invite the people involved in the conflict to have a confrontation. This usually does not work for two reasons.

1.  The people involved in the conflict are only the ones where it actually exploded in the system. They are not the point of origin.  These people are only the most anxious ones who are unable to manage their own anxiety and thus get caught up in the emotion of conflict.

2.  When conflict has risen, the lower brain centers have usually taken over and rational thought is unlikely until people have time to calm themselves. Thus, confrontation will not be tapping into people's thinking abilities, but rather promoting their immature behaviour.

## 13.2  BLAME WITHIN THE CONFLICT PATTERN

The experience of conflict within a group often results in blaming one person.
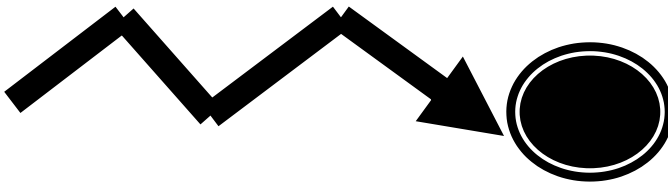
**When the real problem is not addressed, people will begin a "witch hunt" to find someone they can call "the problem" in an attempt to reduce the group's anxiety.**

Blame tends to be an issue only when no one is sure who is responsible. When someone in the group takes responsibility for part or all of the problem, blame usually disappears because people feel less anxiety (Miller, 2002).

The act of blaming someone else gives all the power to the person being blamed, while it declares everyone else to be powerless. Usually it is the least capable person who gets blamed, and this tends to result in the least capable person who is given the power (Miller, 2002).

Everyone becomes organized and focused on the least capable person. When this happens no one is in control. There is usually no leader when one person is blamed.

**Who receives the most negative focus at your workplace? Who receives the least negative focus? How do you participate in this process?** _____

_____

_____

## 13.3 SCAPEGOATING WITHIN THE CONFLICT PATTERN

**A scapegoat is the person who is blamed. This person is usually the most reactive and immature member of the group. They are usually the people who are on the outside of triangles (Miller, 2002).**

When the anxiety in a group becomes intense, the group needs a way of reducing it to feel more comfortable. The scapegoat becomes the focus of all the group anxiety.

Having a scapegoat decreases the anxiety of the group and decreases each person's awareness of their part in the problem. As people's anxiety is lowered through the use of a scapegoat, they typically aren't concerned about the real problem or their part in it. It is easier to focus on someone else (Miller, 2002).

People start to believe that the problem is isolated in the scapegoat and that once the scapegoat leaves everything will be better. No change is made in the system other than to freeze out the scapegoat by keeping them on the outside of triangles.

When the scapegoat does leave, the problem does not go away. When problems aren't resolved within one relationship they are displaced onto another one. The replacement for the scapegoat may become the new scapegoat or another immature member of the group may become the focus.

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This can go on indefinitely until the real problem driving the anxiety is solved.

**?**

  **Have you ever been the focus of negativity at work or at home?  How did you handle it?** _____

_____

_____

## 13.4  NAVIGATING CONFLICT

For conflict to continue you need at least three things, that is three sides of a triangle:

1.  An anxiety generator

2.  An anxiety amplifier

3.  An anxiety diffuser

Observe who is filling each of these roles and refuse to take part in one of these sides.  The most attractive role to take in this situation is that of the anxiety diffuser because it seems that reducing the anxiety would solve the problem of conflict.  However, if you choose to take on the role of the anxiety diffuser then you will likely become filled with anxiety and have no possibility of a real solution.

People in conflict are reacting out of their survival instinct.  It is normal to react to a perceived threat.  If you can think

of the conflict as a threat response then you will be less likely to get drawn into it.

The following tips are useful in a conflict situation:

1.  Be as neutral as possible about annoyances and personality conflict.

2.  Look for the source of the anxiety.  There will often be many sources.

3.  Observe how each person became triangled into the conflict.

4.  Get as clear as possible about the issues involved in the conflict.  Get the facts.  Don't let your emotions take over.

5.  Ask questions to get more clarity about the issues.

6.  Think through the issues and make a plan of how to respond.

7.  Take action on your plan.

8.  Maintain calm within yourself and stay connected with the others in the group.

**?** **How can you keep your thinking brain in control in the presence of a difficult person, anxiety, or conflict?**

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Conflict needs action before it will resolve.  The deceiving desire for most people is for one side of the conflict to win.  However, winning won't solve anything.  Take action as much as possible to get out of the conflict and find a solution.

If you are a leader in the group, provide as much information as possible about the issues involved in the conflict.  Others will be less likely to make up gossip about the conflict or to create their own stories about the issues when they are informed.

We have seen situations where the polarized people in the group actually agree with each other concerning the issues argued about, but because emotions are involved they don't realize it.  When emotion is involved it is difficult to hear others and understand what they are really saying.  The less emotion involved in a conflict situation, the easier it will be to hear what the other is saying and find resolution to the disagreements.  Then the underlying problems can also be addressed.

Treat others as you want them to respond.  Communicate to others in the group as if they are mature adults.  Others

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tend to be more receptive to information and may act more like mature adults when related to in this way.

Focus on the most mature people in the group. These are the people who tend to be the most motivated and capable of change. They are the most likely to not get drawn into the anxiety of the moment and tend to be more thoughtful about the issues.

Reduce the spread of anxiety by framing the conflict in a positive light. You might suggest that conflict presents an opportunity to learn and find better solutions. This could reduce the anxiety and actually provide more opportunity to learn and find solutions.

# SESSION 14
## CUTOFF

Cutoff is the fifth and final pattern used to dilute and manage anxiety. Cutoff is created out of relational processes as are all of the patterns.
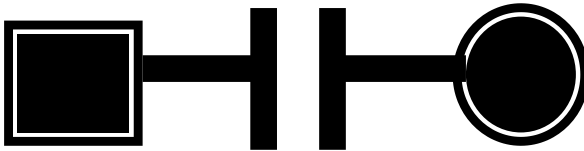


## 14.1 CUTOFF

> **Cutoff is an emotional separation that leads to a physical separation.**

Cutoff often occurs because people cannot get enough emotional separation from each other. It is a misperception that people separate from each other due to not enough connection. Usually people separate when there is too much togetherness and they feel that they are losing their individuality within the togetherness. The emotional separation is a reaction to the intensity of the togetherness.

When there is too much togetherness in a system or pressure for too much togetherness, people become anxious. If there is not room for emotional separation at work, then people will separate themselves physically from the group.

Cutoff occurs when someone leaves the system permanently. It is a permanent solution to a relationship problem. However, cutoff provides no resolution to the problem underlying the anxiety.

This pattern often occurs in business when it appears to be the only answer to conflict. It may be the scapegoat that cuts off. Or, it may be the more mature and capable people within the system who get tired of constant problems at work and find another job.

Cutoff preserves the togetherness within the group because only members who will adapt to the togetherness stay in the system. In this way it also preserves the homeostasis within the system.

**Example** **For example, a review of job requirements results in pressure to conform to a new way of doing the job. Not all employees accept this new way, but feel pressured to do it anyway. This results in increased sick leave among the staff and many staff start looking for a new job. In other words, due to the increased togetherness in the system, many employees begin to cutoff from the system.**

## 14.2 NAVIGATING CUTOFF

As the person cutting off is probably doing so to separate from the intensity of the togetherness of the group, it can be helpful to purposefully allow that person their own individuality.  In reaction to cutoff, people in the group will often try even harder to get the person to join in the togetherness, "see the light," or change their ways.

In this way the person cutting off may experience change back requests from others in an attempt to preserve homeostasis.  However, this results in them cutting off even more intensely.  To the person cutting off, it just serves as proof that they cannot be an individual in the group.

The best way to manage oneself in a situation ending in cutoff is to stay as calm as possible.  Maintain some connection to the person cutting off if this is possible.  This will reduce the intensity of the cutoff and possibly preserve a relationship.  Also, allow that person to be an individual, having different beliefs, different values, etc.

The person may not need to cutoff as much if the togetherness intensity has reduced.

If the person does cutoff and leave the group, it is important to be open to discussion about the cutoff and about the reactions of others to the cutoff.  This may help to reduce the reactions of others to the cutoff and help everyone to think more clearly.

As the togetherness forces in a system often increase after a cutoff, it is important to encourage diversity of thought and problem solving even more.

# SESSION 15
## THE PROCESS OF SYSTEMS

This section explains three important issues for thinking systems.  They are crisis, symptoms, and content/process.

## 15.1 CRISIS

Crises are situations that challenge people's ability to cope and tend to have the effect of bringing people closer together.  The togetherness created by the crisis can actually feel welcome to people because it may temporarily reduce the anxiety created by the crisis.

A group or specific members of the group who are more comfortable with increased togetherness may perpetuate the crisis in order to maintain the comfortable feeling they experience.

This can lead to a business that is organized around crisis.  The business may go from one crisis to another through the members' attempts to sooth their anxiety.

Crisis is also a function of leadership.  Members will be more likely to create and maintain crisis when there is poor leadership.  With little structure provided by the leader, people may attempt to create their own structure through crisis.

When there is good leadership in a system, people tend to be less anxious and more comfortable because they are clear about their place and the direction of the group.  Crisis is less attractive with good leadership.

## 15.2  SYMPTOMS

Symptoms arise first in the most emotionally immature or dependent members of a group.

 Symptoms can be any of the following:

1.  Physical symptoms
    - Getting sick
    - Becoming injured


2.  Emotional symptoms
    - Mental health problems
    - Stress leaves

3.  Social symptoms
    - Withdrawing from the group
    - Exhibiting bizarre behaviour

Focusing on symptoms does not lead to change because symptoms typically occur in the members who are the least capable of change.  Focusing change efforts on those who are the least capable of change is futile.

It is more important to maintain a focus on your own goals and those of the business *and* stay connected to those who become symptomatic.  In this way you may help them reduce their symptoms through their calm connection with you.  Or, they may continue to be symptomatic, but they will not take you down with them.

The only symptoms that are useful to address are those due to a lack of information.  For example, hiring a new staff member who is unskilled at computer usage.  In this

case it would be useful to focus on the symptom (lack of knowledge) and give this person training.

## 15.3  CONTENT AND PROCESS

Content refers to the information that comes at us.  It refers to the subject of arguments and the issues discussed.  Process refers to the underlying patterns and process behind the content.  It refers to the way something is said rather than what is actually said or the relationship between two people rather than the issues between them.

"Thinking systems" involves noticing the difference between content and process.  Content is the issues and personalities involved in the patterns.  Process is an awareness of the emotional system in which the patterns take place.

Underlying all relationships is a need to preserve self within the relationship.  This is the process of all relationships.

All people need focus.  Groups need focus.  If they don't have a focus they will create one.  The need for a focus is part of the emotional process.  The actual focus is content.

Leaders can use this need for focus to provide others with meaningful goals and ideals.  Leaders can shift an entire group toward objectives that are supportive to the growth and productivity of a business if they are aware of the importance of focus within a group.

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# PART FIVE
## THE LEADERSHIP PLAN OF ACTION

# SESSION 16
## THE FOCUS OF LEADERSHIP

**Taking a leadership role in any system, including the work system, involves mastering the ability to navigate oneself within relationships. It necessitates an understanding of the relationship patterns and one's own role in the patterns.**

Imaginative leadership involves gaining an understanding of how relationship processes in your own relationship systems work. A helpful way to establish knowledge of the relationship patterns and your own role within them is to create a map of the flow of anxiety.

## 16.1 MAP THE FLOW OF ANXIETY

Anxiety flows through a system. Anxiety has specific sources and predictable routes of transmission. Learn to observe anxiety at its source and watch where it goes from there.

Watch for triangles and other patterns at play. In each direct relationship with another, ask yourself who or what the third side of the triangle might be. This will make the triangle more noticeable.

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Look for:

1.  **Triangles**
2.  **Overfunctioning and underfunctioning reciprocity**
3.  **Distance and/or pursuit**
4.  **Conflict**
5.  **Cutoff**

When anxiety comes toward you, try to maintain your thinking capacity and be as objective as possible. This will help you to get less sucked into the flow of anxiety.

Do your best to not absorb the anxiety. Leaders have natural positions to take on the anxiety in the system in a misguided attempt to fix it. However, the more you absorb anxiety, the less likely you will be able to find a good solution.

Look at the issues involved in the anxiety. Ask questions about what isn't clear. Get as much understanding and communication about the issues as possible, without making them personal.

Finally, take responsibility for your own contribution to the flow of anxiety and make efforts to stay connected to others in the system. Look for the ways you increase togetherness with others and by doing this prevent solutions from being found.

**?**  **In what ways do you increase the togetherness pressures in your work system?**

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## 16.2 LEADERSHIP IS THE ONLY WAY OUT OF THE PATTERNS

Leadership is the key ingredient to productivity in a workplace.  The problems that most people have in work situations are relational, rather than the work itself.  The more the leader can be knowledgeable about relationship process/emotional process, the fewer problems are likely to plague a workplace.

Anyone at any level can become a leader.  The moment one takes responsibility for one's own life, that person becomes a leader.

**Imaginative leadership happens when you take full responsibility for yourself as it is only then that your imagination can fully blossom.**

Imagine a workplace where every person acted as a leader within their own position.

- Every person taking responsibility for self, not blaming anyone for their position in life.
- Every person watching for emotional process and reacting less to it.
- Every person attending to issues, rather than personalities or taking sides.
- Every person taking action to create change and productivity in their own position.

This would create a great workplace indeed. However, this is unlikely given the subtle nature of the emotional system and the misunderstanding of most people about relationships. When you take responsibility for becoming a leader you not only influence your own life and destiny, but you can also begin and sustain much productivity within the workplace.

All of the patterns have a common theme. When involved in a pattern you are fusing with a group or a person and losing your individuality. Then the action you take starts to be dependent on what you think others are feeling and doing. That is how simple it is to get involved in the reciprocity of the patterns.

We are all caught in patterns to some degree. To avoid getting caught in the patterns as much as possible it is necessary to create a passionate focus on yourself and your own sense of individuality.

A leader's sense of "being" and "functioning" are interconnected, meaning that the more you focus on your "being," self, or life direction, the more your functioning

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or action is positively affected.  Conversely, the more you focus on lessening your reactivity and taking action toward your goals, the more your sense of self will be positively affected.

Leadership involves conscious choice about what you do want and don't want in your life.  Living this way involves focusing on more than survival and risk management.  It involves focusing on life direction, goals, and principles.

Your natural alarm system won't signal you to act when it doesn't sense a threat.  That means that the system you rely on to get you motivated and taking action won't help you with life direction.  It will only help you avoid a perceived threat.

**To take leadership in your life you must learn to take action without threat and anxiety.  You must learn to take action by choice and intention.**

**Is there anyone at your work that is very good at managing relationships?** _____

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## 16.3  DIFFERENTIATE YOURSELF FROM THE EMOTIONAL SYSTEM

To act separately from simple threat response, one must separate oneself from the emotional system to some degree.  That is, you must separate your own emotional destiny from that of others.

**The forces of togetherness will keep you staying the same and within your comfort zone.  You must separate yourself from the emotional processes of togetherness somewhat before you can take action.**

This doesn't involve abandoning togetherness or relationships in any way.  Rather, it simply means tipping the scale of individuality and togetherness *slightly towards individuality*.  Most people are so focused on togetherness, that just a slight shift towards individuality can make a significant difference in life.

**How has getting outside the system been helpful for your personal growth and leadership or change efforts?** _____

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Focusing on individuality means focusing more on facts than on feelings.  It means not getting stuck in one's emotions.  When focusing on facts it is easier to have a calm presence, rather than being a transmitter for anxiety.

It is possible to use reciprocity to your advantage.  Calm yourself first and then use the relationship principle of reciprocity to calm others with your presence.

## 16.4  THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

As Roberta Gilbert writes in her book entitled "Extraordinary Relationships" (1992), there are three characteristics that exemplify healthy relationships.  They are separate, equal, and open.

**Separate**

Those in separate relationships function as individuals within the relationship, rather than being at the whim of the relational forces.  They tend not to lose self in the relationship, or do so to a lesser degree.  These people do not need a relationship to "complete" themselves because they already have a defined self.  When one is separate in a relationship one has the choice whether or not to become emotional or get drawn in to a pattern.  Separateness provides the ability to choose thinking rather than emotion in any given circumstance (Gilbert, 1992).

**Equal**

Those in equal relationships perceive each person in the relationship as equally responsible, capable, and skilled. The people may have different skills or interests, but each is seen as just as important as the other. This equality forms a basis for respect. This is the opposite of the underfunctioning and overfunctioning position as neither person is in a one up or a one down position (Gilbert, 1992).

**Open**

Openness refers to the ability to communicate within a relationship. Openness in relationship is the opposite of cutoff. In an open relationship people can talk about anything with freedom. They are in contact with all others in the relationship system. When people work to lessen their patterns in a relationship the communication automatically improves. Usually a communication problem is a symptom of the lack of openness in a relationship, it is not a cause (Gilbert, 1992).

## 16.5  VIRUS METAPHOR

Anxious people are similar in many ways to a virus (Friedman, 2007). They violate boundaries. They demand adaptation to themselves. They don't learn from their experience. This may sound harsh, but take some time to notice the most anxious people in your systems and see if they fit this description.

> **Anxious people can only survive and continue to infect a system when they have a host. When one maintains a strong boundary it can keep out the virus. Developing strong boundaries means having a strong sense of self and a focus on individuality.**

Don't be a host for anxious people to infect you and the entire system. This won't serve anyone for anything but an anxious focus.

Many people mistake hosting for loving. They think that allowing another to infect them with anxiety or stress helps the other person and makes this an act of altruism. However, this will only help the anxious person to reduce his or her anxiety temporarily. This will simply maintain the problem overtime. The anxious person can never be held responsible for his or her self if you keep saving them from this. Don't mistake hosting for loving!

Leaders provide immunity for their businesses. They have the ability to keep strong boundaries and prevent a virus from infecting the workplace. Anxiety is a powerful force. If you don't keep it out it will take over.

## 16.6 Two of the Biggest Mistakes for Leaders

There are two mistakes leaders make in terms of allowing anxious people to infect the workplace (Friedman, 2007).

1. The first mistake is to allow the most immature and anxious members to set the agendas and focus of the business.  This is an adaptation to weakness, not strength.  Typically the most motivated and imaginative people will leave if this is allowed to occur.

2. The second mistake is to believe that anxious people can be changed through efforts at insight, reason, or love.  Rather, you need to take a stand with them to limit their capacity to infect others.

**?**

**How have you managed anxious people in your system?** _____

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# SESSION 17
## DEFINING SELF IN A SYSTEM

Defining a self within a system is one of the most powerful things one can do to take leadership and navigate emotional processes. You stand outside the group mentality when you do this. Imagination is a useful tool when coming up with what kind of self one wants to be.

The various ways of defining a self described below overlap, as they describe different aspects of the same phenomenon.

## 17.1  HOW TO DEFINE A SELF

**Defining self involves:**

- Knowing what you stand for
- Being clear about your personal values and principles both at home and at work
- Knowing on whom or what you base your values
- Knowing your purpose
- Maintaining clear goals and a focus on them
- Taking responsibility for your own destiny
- Using your imagination and welcoming challenge to create more and better opportunities and growth

*Imagination and vision* are emotional phenomena (Friedman, 2007). You can get yourself and others more focused on these types of emotional processes when you

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define yourself within a system and decide to focus on these yourself.

You must be willing to risk disapproval from others when you tell them exactly what you think and where you stand. You also must be willing to give up the comfortable feelings of togetherness.

Definition of self is an immune response (Friedman, 2007). Thus, definition of self is the creation of a boundary. Boundaries are established when you define where you stand with others.  It is harder to be infected by anxious others when you have a boundary in the form of self-definition.  It isn't your job to be nice to others in your system.  It is your job to let others know where you stand, what you value, and what they can expect from you.


## 17.2  TAKING AN I POSITION

One of the easiest ways to define oneself is to take "I positions" with others.

**An I position is a statement, action, or choice that is used to let others know what you believe and plan to do.**

To create an I position, one must shift towards the "I" in individuality.  This means focusing on your own individuality distinguished from the group togetherness.

I positions focus on facts not feelings.  I positions aren't right or wrong.  Rather, they are about what you believe.

It doesn't matter whether others agree with you or not. When you take an I position you stop yourself from merely reacting to the emotional processes around you and you begin to think your way out of a situation.  This tends to stop reactivity within the system because you are no longer being an anxiety transmitter.  Rather, you are thinking not reacting.

**?** **Do I communicate clearly with others – say I agree or disagree and state the reason?** _____

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**Example** **For example, a company is making decisions about how to manage the recession in the economy.  Tom risks telling others his opinion that one manager must be fired.  Tom takes a stand with others about his opinion while staying connected to them.  He knows he has important thoughts to contribute to the company.  He remains open to change and flexible with his ideas, that there may be another solution than firing the manager.**

Taking an I position can mean giving hard feedback to others. It usually isn't possible to be nice all the time and be an effective leader. Giving hard feedback is a risk because you may end up on the outside of triangles for a while. However, it is necessary to let others know where you stand even if it is difficult to say or hear.

**?** **Am I able to risk giving hard feedback when I have to?** _____

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## 17.3 EMOTIONAL NEUTRALITY

Taking a leadership role involves increasing one's capacity to be emotionally neutral. Neutrality is unlike emotional reactivity, as it is fairly non-emotional.

**Emotional neutrality involves not taking sides in a conflict, but rather focusing on the facts of finding solutions. It involves being connected with others while observing them at the same time.**

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It is easier to be neutral when thinking from theory or principle because this creates objectivity within oneself. Neutrality enables one to see others' views and opinions freely, rather than to see them as threats.

When one person in a system is emotionally neutral others tend to become calmer, problems tend to become less problematic, people tend to shift from immaturity to competence, and people tend to have more of a sense of humour about the situation.

**?** **Am I able to give my position without blame or becoming defensive?** _____

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**Example** **A boss must confront a situation of two staff having an affair.  Although his personal beliefs are that affairs are wrong and shameful, he approaches the couple with emotional neutrality.  By doing this he is able to talk directly to each person, present the facts of the situation, present the company policy about office relationships, and look for a solution to the situation without getting upset.**

# 17.4 NON-ANXIOUS PRESENCE

Another quality of a leader is a non-anxious presence.

**A non-anxious presence is a calm state of being that has the ability to influence others towards calm.**

When taking a non-anxious presence it is important to observe rather than react. It is a focus on communicating to others with both verbal and nonverbal language. It is staying true to yourself while staying connected to others.

**Example** **The recession in the economy creates tension at work. Susan notices her coworkers become increasingly frustrated and impatient. Rather than react to others when in meetings, Susan focuses on her own breathing, on staying calm, and on connecting with others from this place of calm. Over time she notices that others tend to respond to her with greater respect and thinking ability when in contact with her.**

**?**

**Can I stay connected to others at work?** __

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**?**    **Who is the most difficult person to stay in contact with? Who is the easiest to stay in contact with?** _

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## 17.5  SABOTAGE AND RESISTANCE

Sabotage and resistance from others are part of the process of leadership.  Expect these to be there when taking a leadership role.

**?**    **Give an example of a time when you felt sabotaged by another?** _____

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Sabotage can occur at both an internal and external level. It is just as easy to sabotage oneself as it is to be sabotaged by others.

**?**    **Give an example of a time when you sabotaged your own change efforts?** _____

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> **Leadership and change represent a disruption in homeostasis. Sabotage is simply a way to re-establish homeostasis.**

Others may feel they are losing control and demand you to change back. Experiencing sabotage is a good sign because it means you are shifting the emotional system and creating change. Others will only respond this way because they perceive a threat. The threat they perceive is the change you are creating.

The demand for a quick fix is a type of sabotage. The faster the solution, the less discomfort others experience. Try not to get infected by others to find a quick fix. Taking time to think through as many variables as you can usually results in much better solutions.

> **? How do others pressure you to find a quick fix, rather than taking time to find a good solution?** __
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> _____
>
> _____

## 17.6 NAVIGATING SABOTAGE

One of most important parts of leadership is the ability to navigate the sabotage. It is possible to do this by focusing on your direction and maintaining your position.

Determine your own behaviour, rather than allowing others to determine your behaviour.

Your secret weapon as a leader is your ability to act based on well thought out principles and to avoid sabotage by staying focused on your goals.

**?** **What could you tell yourself to keep yourself on course when you recognize that others are trying to sabotage you? When you are sabotaging yourself?**

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## 17.7 CHOICE DILEMMAS

There is no such thing as a painless decision. All decisions have both positive and negative consequences. Another quality of leaders is the ability to make decisions when they need to be made, rather than waiting for someone else to do it for them.

When you make a decision based on your thinking, the stress and tension may get worse before they get better. This is a change in the status quo. Accept and get comfortable with this as part of leadership.

Decisions are chances to clarify yourself to others and create a plan of action that is consistent with your

position.  You can't please everyone.  The best you can do is to think through situations and make decisions with the knowledge available at the time.

Those who don't make their own decisions are usually borrowing their thinking from the emotional system.  Leadership is about staying connected to your personal values and making decisions based on those, rather than allowing others' values to determine your life course.


## 17.7  A LEADER'S ROLE WITH OTHERS

Leaders have more influence on others when they don't try to control them.  When you are not trying to get others to follow you they are more likely to follow you.  You can't control what others do or don't do.  You can only control how you decide to respond to others.

**People tend to follow those who are calm and focused.  Good, differentiated, and imaginative leadership is attractive.  People tend to follow true leadership, eventually, when they have exhausted their efforts at sabotage.**

Lead others with action.  Taking action is a sign that you are committed and serious about change.  Others will respond to action with a change in their own functioning, rather than simply talking about change.

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It is necessary to disturb the status quo and get uncomfortable to get real change. Progress only happens when you are outside your comfort zone.

Unmotivated people will not typically respond to insight. Trying to fix them usually doesn't change anything. The only thing that works with unmotivated people is to change yourself while you are in connection to these people.

Focus your change efforts on those people who are the most capable of change. They are more likely to have their own leadership qualities and the ability to tolerate discomfort to achieve change.

Others may expect their leaders to be their new parents. They tend to project their own unresolved emotional issues from their relationship with their parents onto leaders. These issues didn't start in your relationship and most likely can't be solved in your relationship. Try not to get stuck trying to fix others' unresolved issues. This is their responsibility, not yours.

Allowing others to feel what they feel is often a sign of respect. Trying to change their feelings or save them from uncomfortable feelings is a sign of overfunctioning. Allow others to feel uncomfortable feelings and allow yourself to do the same.

The leader's role is to focus on the goals and productivity of the workplace. This must be your primary focus at work and with others at work. It is the leader's responsibility to draw out the best thinking of others. Giving others permission to speak openly can free them to use their best thinking.

**?**  **Have you ever worked under a mature leader or been one yourself?** _____

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**?**  **What have you observed to be the behaviours of a mature leader?** _____

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# SESSION 18
## THE ALLIANCE OF PERSONAL AND BUSINESS GOALS

The workplace can be a place for people to pursue their own personal dreams and goals. People usually work much harder when they feel it is in their personal interest to do so.

## 18.1 USE BUSINESS GOALS TO PROMOTE THE PERSONAL HEALTH OF ALL EMPLOYEES

Integrating business and personal goals could mean gaining credentials for a job promotion, learning the skills to change departments or positions, or simply being more useful for the company and receiving a pay increase.

When people feel the boss is supporting them on their personal development they usually respond much more positively towards him or her. As a leader, you can find ways to join personal employee goals with business goals in the interests of both employee and workplace.

Appealing to the emotions of employees to get them interested in your vision and that of the company can also serve to help them get connected to their own purpose in life. The need for life purpose is one of the most basic of drives for people. You can use this need for the good of others and the business.

## 18.2 IMAGINATIVE LEADERSHIP ABILITIES

People tend to put in more effort at work when they are able to maintain some individuality. They will typically be less anxious and more thoughtful. Doing the following encourages the individuality of all people at work.

- State ideas to others
- Invite debate
- Continue to be open to feedback
- Tell others you will make the final decision, yet appreciate their feedback

A positive workplace is one that allows individuality and life purpose in each of its members. It is a place where others are able to develop their own strengths. It is a place where others are able to follow their own life direction.

With less automatic emotional process and reactivity in a workplace, there will be more thinking. The workplace could ideally become more of a *collection of individuals* than a group bound by togetherness, where each person uses their own imaginative leadership to create direction and change.

## 18.3 NAVIGATING A RECESSION

When writing this manual the recession of 2008/2009 was occurring. The presence of a recession tends to increase

anxiety and increase the forces for togetherness.  It also tends to block productive thinking.

Periods of recession are also opportunities to create change in the workplace.  They are good times to challenge others because people are already out of their comfort zones.  Others may be more likely to accept change when they are already looking for stability.

Use periods of crisis for growth and be aware that growth involves painful experiences.  Allowing others to experience their own pain is a way of supporting their growth.  This may lead to a greater capacity for leadership and productivity for yourself and your staff.

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