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## **Minding Our Business and Losing Our Mind: How can we recover our full consciousness after losing it, in time to save our civilization from suicide?**

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My path of personal development has taken me on roundabout routes through the wholistic spectrum of body, emotions, mind, relationships (with other people and the environment) and spirit. My education and training in psychology, medicine and psychiatry thoroughly indoctrinated me in the theories, research, beliefs and practices of modern science, medicine, psychiatry and psychotherapy. Unfortunately, these included skepticism and even serious disparagements of emotional, intuitive and spiritual aspects of life.

Reconnecting with the spiritual end of the spectrum has been a particular challenge. It took many years of 'peeling the onion of life' to identify and neutralize the intellectualized defenses against awarenesses of feelings, intuitions, consciousness of my oneness with all of creation in the physical world, and of my oneness with the All.

Over the years, I've pondered just how my brainwashing occurred and what I can learn from understanding that process, along with the approaches that have proved helpful in opening into broader and deeper wholistic consciousness. This is the basis of these musings.

### **Lessons about distancing from aspects of awareness**

I often felt in childhood that my emotional needs were unmet. My father was absent and my mother had suffered emotional traumas that left her with difficulties in appreciating my emotional needs. I learned to bury my feelings rather than suffer the pains of feeling my unmet needs. I cut off awareness that I even had emotional needs as I grew up, investing more and more of my energies in developing my thinking and intellectual abilities.

My schooling was a wonderful experience of expanding my fund of memorized knowledge and reasoning skills. Very little attention was given to my emotional development, which continued to atrophy. My studies of psychology, medicine and psychiatric psychotherapy were largely focused on cognitive skills.

I was deeply disappointed in medical school. I had thought that in studying medicine I would be joining a community of 'gentlemen' – in the sense of becoming part of a truly caring, healing community. To my great distress, I found that medical education focused almost exclusively on the physical body. The person inhabiting the body was largely ignored. Symptoms and diagnoses were addressed rather than people. In all of my medical school experience, I found only a few physicians whom I fully respected – who cared deeply for the people who came to them for help; deeply enough to take the time to get to know them and to relate to them as persons to whom the physician was a consultant on their journeys through life.

I have come to see that my distressing journey through medical indoctrination was but a symptom of a malaise and mental derangement in the modern world. In the pursuit of reductionistic, analytical dissections of the physical world as the only legitimate reality, Western civilization has paradoxically lost its mind (in the sense of going crazy) – by so strongly attaching to and identifying with the functions of reasoning about the physical world, to the point that we have unreasonably disconnected from the knowings of heart and spirit. Knowing is the inner knowledge that comes with intuitive/ psychic/ spiritual awarenesses. This is an inner, intuitive sense of our oneness with all of creation; of the rightness and wrongness of our ways of behaving and relating to the world around us.

While I was distressed by these dimmings of my professional and human enthusiasm, I didn't have the full understanding at that time which hindsight provides, from the vantage point of 40 years of life and professional experiences later. At the time that I took a year's research fellowship between my second and third year in medical school, I saw this primarily as an educational enrichment. The wisdom of hindsight leads me to see that I was reaching compassion burnout from studying bits and pieces of people, with little reference to the people whose pieces were being examined, dissected, analyzed, conceptualized, theorized, pathologized and remedied with physical manipulations. I sorely needed a break to gather my shattered humanity back together.

I finished medical school and internship, and again was hopeful that in entering psychiatric training I would find deeper understandings of people and how to help them. Yet again I was disappointed, because of the narrow, psychoanalytic focus of psychiatric training in those days.

On the positive side, I studied psychiatry when this profession was entirely focused on psychotherapy. This had been my goal from the start of my medical studies, and I was not disappointed. I began to understand how people get themselves into emotional difficulties and how it is possible to help them extract themselves from the pits they dig and vicious circles they find themselves in and perpetuate. These understandings remain a work in progress these 40 years later.

My psychiatry instructors and supervisors were psychoanalytically oriented and provided a wonderful grounding in in-depth, detailed analyses of norms for people's personality structures and deviations from those norms that became problematical. Their psychoanalytic ways of helping were far more useful in understanding psychopathology than in helping people to change.

The psychoanalytic training was also very narrowly and exclusively focused on the teachings of Freud and his followers. Other theories and methods were viewed with skepticism and disparagement. And the focus remained on the mind and emotions of the individual, with no appreciation of any contributing factors beyond the borders of the individual person.

## **Returning to fuller awarenesses**

Over the years, through reading and attendance at many, varied workshops, I found a broad spectrum of additional views and approaches to understanding and helping people. I have found the following particularly helpful: transactional analysis, gestalt therapy, hypnotherapy, meditation, imagery and relaxation (psychoneuroimmunology), dream analysis, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), and Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) among other approaches. No one therapeutic shoe fits all. It has been most helpful to be able to match the approach the individual and to their specific problems.

### *Clearing emotions*

Over the years, I continued my pursuit of psychoarcheology. I gradually and patiently uncovered layer after layer of my own buried emotions. The easier ones to unearth were my anger, frustrations and disappointments. Beneath these were layers of fears of abandonment, of being unlovable, and of betrayals of trust. Deeper layers yet revealed the hurts of unmet childhood needs. And I was surprised to discover that I had not actually cleared a given layer completely, even though I had reached layers beneath that one. It appeared that I was digging holes through various specific parts of the emotional landscape, but not fully clearing any single layer.

### *Clearing blocks to clearing*

As I learned the process of chipping away at an issue, getting to its deeper, underlying layers, the process became more familiar and therefore easier and quicker. I found I had also diminished my anxieties about the process of digging into buried feelings and issues.

I have come to call these 'meta-anxieties.' They are the locks that the unconscious mind puts on the lids of the trashcans in which it stores unpleasant feelings that we would rather not feel. These take the form of warning signs that say, 'keep away from these issues because they will be painful if you let them out.'

Burying feelings and avoiding them is helpful in childhood, when we have few capacities for dealing with them. From habit, we continue in later life to avoid these locked-away feelings. It is usually a very slow and gradual process through which we learn to identify and unearth these buried feelings and also to identify and deal more readily with the meta-anxieties that keep them locked away. These meta-anxieties may be even more subtle and challenging to neutralize because they are well designed to keep us from stirring the buried hurts, angers and other feelings and memories which felt overwhelming when we hid them away from our conscious awareness.

### *Opening into intuitive and spiritual awarenesses*

My explorations of consciousness over 50 years – in myself; with friends, colleagues, students and clients; and through omnivorous reading and studies with gifted and wise (not always the same!) teachers – have led me to know that we are all part of a collective consciousness. Please note that I do not say "I believe" but rather that "I know" this as an important fact of my reality. More importantly, I not only know this as an intellectual truth, but also 'gnow' this as a truth I perceive and experience first hand.

Coming into this gnoving has been a slow and laborious undertaking. While I always believed that others who were gifted were able to intuit and psychically connect with the world beyond their physical selves, I was skeptical that I could ever experience this personally.

With time and studies, I came to see that a good part of my skepticism derived from anxieties about what others would think of me if they could read some of my personal, intimate thoughts. As I overcame my anxieties and fears about other aspects of my life, my fears about the porousness of psychic boundaries lessened as well.

My explorations with spiritual healers and psychics led me to see that the information shared energetically and intuitively – between ethical participants – led to disclosures of details that very often appeared to be in the best interests of the participants. There were times when intuitive counselors and healers uncovered unconscious materials in clients that proved to be disturbing or painful. However, when approached with the intent that the information be for the highest good of all, whatever was unsettling ended up being helpful in the growth and development of the participants as the materials were absorbed, processed and digested.

Muscle testing in the course of my work on myself and as therapist has given me an enormous boost in learning to trust my intuitive awarenesses. When I have not had clearly demarcated intuitive perceptions, the simple 'Yes' and 'No' provided by my muscle strength or weakness has helped me to identify these awarenesses. Even more importantly, the muscle testing strengthened my abilities to trust these intuitive impressions that were at first often indistinguishable from imagined thoughts and feelings. With time, I have come to identify the intuitive more distinctly from other awarenesses.

Meditation has been another avenue to quiet the distractible mind and connect more deeply with my higher self.

*This pure Mind, which is the source of all things, shines forever with the radiance of its own perfection. But most people are not aware of it and think that the Mind is just the faculty that sees, hears, feels, and knows. Blinded by their own sight, hearing, feeling, and knowing they do not perceive the radiance of the source.*

- Zen Master Huang-po

### *Relationships*

Many of the therapies I studied focused on the problems of individuals. Transactional analysis extended awareness to interactions between two individuals, which was a great step forward. However, it was not until I had an externship in family therapy that I came into awareness of systems theory – focusing on the whole family as a unit intertwined in the problems of its individual members. Family therapy provides theories and interventions to change the whole system, rather than working at changing the individual who is identified as the problem within the system.

Systems theory was a great big doorway into broader views of healing. Systems theory extends our understanding of psychological problems across generations. It has been demonstrated that a serious trauma that generates strong emotional reactions that are not processed by family members can impact future generations. It is not uncommon for the difficult emotions surrounding grief and bereavement to be suppressed – sometimes due to cultural inhibitions; at other times due to conscious or unconscious inhibitions against letting out strong emotions, particularly in public or in front of other family members. When people start tippy-toeing around unmentionable feelings, relationships often become distorted and strained. These strains create further inhibitions that impact children, grandchildren and further generations down the line. Amazingly, the releases of feelings in the family members of the generation that engages in family therapy may include releases of emotions that were buried by ancestors whom the participants in the therapy did not know personally (Payne, 2005).

Bioenergies and interpersonal links through the collective consciousness may also be involved in family interactions, both within a nuclear family and across generations. Homeopathic doctors have remedies for 'miasms,' which are patterns of negative energetic influence that are transmitted from one generation to another. Spiritual healers note that there may be abnormalities in the bioenergy field around people, residuals from ancestral physical illnesses and traumas, and from psychological traumas as well. Bioenergy healings and healing rituals may clear these perturbing influences from across the generations.

Past life memories of traumas may intrude in the lives of individuals and of families. Spiritual healing and past life psychotherapy may release these residuals of traumas (Weiss, 1988).

Spirits of ancestors and of people and animals with whom one has had strong relationships and traumatic experiences may intrude from past life experiences. Again, spiritual healing, intuitive counseling/psychotherapy and healing rituals may be helpful in addressing these (Kelsey and Grant, 1967).

### **How we became separated from broader awarenesses of our interconnectedness**

*The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.*  
- John Milton

Wholistic healing opens us to consciousness of dimensions within and beyond the physical body that have been ignored by conventional medicine, psychology and by modern science as a whole. In addition to mind, which conventional science and medicine attribute solely to electrochemical activities of neurons in the brain, there are emotions, relationships with other people and the environment, plus bioenergies and consciousness that open into spiritual awarenesses.

*The brain is the organ through which we think that we think.*  
- Ambrose Bierce

How have we come to narrow our consciousness so severely in modern society? Much has been written on the difficulties that modern science has in dealing with the non-material aspects of consciousness, health and illness. I will not belabor these issues, other than to observe that modern science has preferred to focus on those phenomena in our physical world that are measurable, while declaring subjective awarenesses to be immaterial to science (as they define science). In Eastern and traditional societies, the science of subjective awarenesses is well researched. Study and consensual validation is achieved through meditation, with well-mapped pathways for personal development. Western science generally rejects this mode for research.

Evidence for intuitive, psychic and spiritual phenomena is readily available. In Eastern and traditional societies, the subjective awarenesses that are achieved through meditation have been systematically studied and consensually validated over thousands of years. Parapsychology has meticulously validated the existence of telepathy, clairsentience, precognition, psychokinesis (PK/ action of the mind from a distance) and forwards and backwards in time PK. Healing research has validated the effects of bioenergy and consciousness in altering the conditions of living organisms.

Why have science and medicine had such a difficult time even considering the evidence for these transpersonal phenomena, much less accepting them? I believe that a major block to change may lie in the mind-set of modern science in English-speaking countries that has been shaped to a significant degree by our language.

In the expanded perspectives of wholistic awareness, we 'gnow' with much deeper awareness that which is beyond words. There is a feeling of validity to meditative and intuitive awarenesses that, with practice, gives intuitives a sense of the realness of their perceptions. In part it is a characteristic quality of perception that is something like a specific taste on the tongue and/or odor. Once we have come to know that taste and/or odor, then even with our eyes closed we can identify what it is. And so it is in some measure with intuitive awarenesses, though this veridical sensation may vary from strong to weak to non-existent. Nevertheless, to share and compare/contrast these intuitive and spiritual gnodings and to share and explore them with others is a challenge. We bring our gnodings that are beyond words out through the little 'i' (our physical world being), whereupon what we gnow is pared down and distorted as the reflections from the greater pool of gnnowledge are crystallized into what has been systematized in culturally shaped linguistics, and where it manifests out of the all-inclusive vastness of the Infinite Source and is (in most human consciousness) frozen into the yins and yangs of the world of our senses. In concretizing it, the gnowing loses its fluidity and connection with the seas of consciousness whence it came.

*The Dharma that is spoken is not the true Dharma. As soon as you try to explain things, the true meaning is lost.*

- Traditional Buddhist observation

### **English language biases us against spiritual awarenesses**

*Maya is the illusion of boundaries, the creation of a mind that has lost the cosmic perspective. It comes from seeing a million things 'out there' and missing one thing, the invisible field that is the origin of the Universe.*

- Deepak Chopra

It is fascinating to note a historical distortion in the English language, in which 'mind' is a peculiarity that has been getting us in deep trouble – because it is such a shallow concept.

For years I've been aware, from lecturing in Germanic countries, that the word 'mind' does not translate into German. For years I puzzled over how this could be, when I perceive Germanic people to be strongly attached to mental analyses. I thought the Germans were odd in omitting 'mind' from their language.

Here is a suggestion for translating 'mind' into German, provided by Rev. Jeffrey Utter, who is sufficiently proficient in both German and English to navigate in philosophical and theological discussions in both languages:

'Geist' is the word used most often to translate the English concept of 'mind.' The principal ambiguity in 'Geist,' from the perspective of English speakers, is that it refers both to what we call 'mind' and what we call 'spirit.'

Others have suggested:

In psychology, *mind*, which connotes rational, intellectual knowledge, devoid of emotional or moral overtones, has displaced *soul* in designating the invisible component

of the person. Something is lost in translation when Teilhard de Chardin's use of the French, *ame*, and Freud's use of the German, *seele*, are rendered in English as *mind*. Shorn of spiritual connotations, mind is disconnected from values and emotions and does not fully convey what is meant by *ame*, *seele* or *soul*.

- A. Wierzbicka

"The translation of 'mind' is quite tricky - it can mean Geist in the sense of Sinn ('sense'), Verstand ('intelligence') or Bewusstsein ('consciousness'). Das Geistige is the spiritual aspect versus das Materielle, the material aspect. Mind in the sense you are looking for would best be translated as die Psyche in the psychological sense, I believe."

- Angela

In the last observation I note that 'die psyche' refers more to the specific personal characteristics of the consciousness of an individual personality, and is therefore not a generic designation for 'mind.'

Recently, I have come to realize that the problem lies not with Germans but with English-speaking people. We have dissected away the concept of 'mind' from its original meaning that included 'spirit.' We have reified 'mind,' a portion of consciousness. That is (per the online Free Dictionary) we have come "to regard or treat an abstraction as if it had concrete or material existence." We have then proposed that mind resides in the brain, where it is produced through complex electrochemical reactions and interactions between billions of nerve cells.

Having held to these beliefs about mind over several hundred years, modern conventional science now has a concept that has grown into a belief that is deified into the equivalent of a religious tenet. To question this definition of mind is to commit the equivalent of a heresy because it is taken so much for granted. Furthermore, 'mind' excludes the broader aspects of intuitive/ psychic/ spiritual consciousness that have become unfamiliar to many in modern society. People are therefore uncomfortable with it because it is unknown to them, beyond their conscious experience, and considered to belong to domains that are dealt with by clergy, theologians and philosophers.

We have focused on the mental as the best way of relating to the world, and this is getting us in trouble. Deep trouble... When people adopt the mental mode of being and relating, their measures of self-worth often are focused externally rather than internally. They seek validation of themselves through competitive achievements and through material gains. Carried to extremes, this leads to competitive domination over as large a physical or social territory as possible. We are seeing this mental focus unfold in today's world, where people who seek money and power are systematically dominating markets and nations for their own selfish gains. I highly recommend David Korten's excellent book, *The Great Turning*, detailing the corrupting trends of power and domination of those who pursue personal and corporate gains to the exclusion of compassion; who seek immediate, selfish exploitation of resources over husbandry of nature's bounty for future generations; and who are able to ignore and rationalize away the threats of planetary suicide that they are promulgating.

At the same time, when people focus their lives through mental modes of relating to the world, they tend to lessen their connections with heart and spirit awarenesses. These are dismissed as immeasurable intangibles, which in turn leaves those who are mentally focused distanced from emotions and compassion towards their fellow denizens on this planet and from the planet itself as a living eco-biological organism (Lovelock, 1979; 1988; 1991).

Our language traps us here as well into biases that serve to resist shifting away from the mental and material focus as the best ways to relate to the world. That which is not of the measurable, material world is deemed 'immaterial' and 'of no matter.' These terms are used dismissively for whatever we disparage. This serves subtly to strengthen our biases towards the material world being superior and preferable to the worlds of intangible inner and spiritual awarenesses, which 'don't matter' in the 'real world' of pursuits after 'tangible' gains. (I will continue below to point out such biasing terms that lead us to favor the mental and dismiss other aspects of our wholistic selves.)

### **A mental focus, disconnected from the wholeness of ourselves, can lead to damaging effects**

The above helps to explain how we, as English speaking people, may come to be insensitive to the needs of the people, animals, plants, and natural resources who co-inhabit our living environments on this planet. We suffer from personal disconnections that allow many of us – who were raised in a world of material wealth achieved through exploitations that may not have been obvious to us – to turn blinkered or even blinded eyes towards the exploitations, small and large, in which we participate. More importantly, this awareness may help to understand why we have difficulties shifting into the sorts of ecological awareness that can save our planet from destruction.

Thus, my searches for the linguistic origins of 'mind' and its path into the English language are not just an intellectual exercise. I believe that Western culture is trapped in its individual and collective minds – which have become uncomfortable with the broader awarenesses of which we are capable, which I designate as 'gnowing.' This is another disconnect in mental exclusivity – from spiritual awarenesses, which I define as consciousness of oneself that extends beyond one's physical being. Cutting off this awareness has led modern industrial civilization to lose itself in the power-full distortions of how best to relate to our world – primarily through mind.

Paradoxically, in the context of this discussion, one of the most popular and better researched forms of practices in the Western world that deepen inner awareness is called 'mindfulness' meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

*Always think of your mind as a garden,  
and keep it beautiful  
and fragrant with divine thoughts.  
A mind all logic is like a knife all blade. It makes the hand bleed that uses it.  
- Rabindranath Tagore*

### **How we may open our eyes and consciousness to broader awarenesses**

I have puzzled for years over the challenges to helping people change their beliefs ('change their minds' 'comes to mind' here), particularly around difficulties in accepting the reality of wholistic healing and, more particularly, spiritual healing.

*People do not change because they are told to change. People may temporarily alter their behavior because they have been told to do so by those who have power over them, but that is not real change. That is merely a surface shift of outward demeanor. Inner truth has not shifted. As soon as the power over them has been lifted, or can no*



*longer be exerted, people's behavior returns to that which is motivated by their inner truth.*

*The parent of every teenager knows this.*

- Neale Donald Walsch

A part of the problems is the behavior of people in large numbers. When we are in a group of people with whom we are familiar and with whom we feel comfortable, we tend to be more accepting and accommodating to opinions and to suggestions for changes in our understanding of the world. In part this is a matter of our selecting groups of people who are similar to ourselves, but this is not entirely so – as witnessed by bonding that occurs in schools and workplaces.

When people work in groups that exceed 150 and/or live in groups that exceed 150 families, they cannot relate to each person or family in the group. Our limit for socially cohesive group interactions appears to be 150 units. Malcolm Gladwell, in his fascinating book, *The Tipping Point*, observes that work units of under 150 allow people to know each other personally, thereby enhancing group cohesiveness and smoothing working relationships. When help or information is needed, one knows exactly who to go to for the required assistance. The clothing manufacturer Goretex has adhered to this principle, with enormous success. Furthermore, their employee turnover rate is only a third of that of the average for their industry.

The figure of 150 seems to represent the maximum number of individuals with whom we can have a genuinely social relationship, the kind of relationship that goes with knowing who they are and how they relate to us. Putting it another way, it's the number of people you would not feel embarrassed about joining uninvited for a drink if you happened to bump into them in a bar.

- Malcolm Gladwell, p. 179.

Within such a group of comfortable size, opinions, common understandings, and chosen goals can be shifted to take into account the shifting demands faced by the group in their focus and in responses to outside circumstances, as well as to accommodate personal needs of group members.

So we have groupings of those whom we consider close to us, such as 'people in our family;' 'people in our school/ church/ place of employment;' 'people in our immediate neighborhood/ community/ state/ nation;' 'people in our ethnic/ socio-economic/ interest group;' and so on. Those in groups with which we identify and are familiar are more likely to be friendly to us and safe to interact with. We are more likely to listen to new or dissenting views presented by people in such groups, to consider their merits and to adapt ourselves in response to peer opinions and pressures. The good news is that we live in a modern world where we may be engaged with a broad variety of such groups. Electronic communications expand our horizons and our interconnectedness, enabling us to meet and join with interest and work groups around the world. My son-in-law works for IBM and collaborates successfully with teams in the US, Canada, England, Israel, Japan and China, among others.

Perceiving and analyzing the factors relevant to our common good is much easier in smaller groups. Within our communities of comfortable relationships, we can often achieve agreements, accommodations and consensus of opinions that allow us to meet the challenges faced by our groups in ways that are healthy and healing for ourselves and for those in other groups with whom we deal.

President Obama's grass roots approach to dealing with problems makes a lot of sense in light of the above considerations. Working in smaller groups of like-'minded' people, we can bite off a manageable chunk of the global problems, chew on them, digest them, and come up with palatable solutions. This is exemplified as well in the [www.wiserearth.com](http://www.wiserearth.com) global community of planetary healing groups. Each group has chosen a limited ecological focus and is pursuing its implementation. Paul Hawken (2007) summarizes the work of many of these groups, pointing to a hopeful trend towards planetary healing.

The challenge comes in the coordination of these groups for maximal benefits in the limited time remaining – before humanity turns this planet to toast through global heating ('warming' is an unacceptable euphemism); poisons the environment beyond remedy with pollution; exhausts natural resources relative to rising populations; or finds other inventive ways to suicide.

### **Serious dangers in not overcoming our limited range of 'mindfulness'**

Over the centuries from the time we lived in smaller groups as hunters and gatherers, the groups in which we live have swelled from comfortable dozens to difficult-to-manage multitudes. The bad news is that in needing to carve out subgroups of people from populations in towns, cities and our current global village to the 6-plus billion people on this planet, we have come to perceive those who are not in our groups as 'others.' When we have to deal with more than 150 people or families, we end up perceiving the masses of 'other' people as outsiders to our comfort-zone groups. We lump the overload into conceptual categories that our awareness (our 'minds') can digest and manage.

The most serious mischief and dangers arise when we start to attribute all sorts of characteristics to these 'others' that may lead to exploitation, conflicts and scapegoating. Those from other groups are of unknown qualities and may be perceived and experienced as uncomfortable, unsafe or dangerous.

The fact that they have developed cultures with beliefs and behaviors different from ours often also leads to misunderstandings and prejudices. Politicians cash in on our discomforts, blaming these 'others' for whatever unhappiness or misfortunes we may experience within our own groups. The electorate is no better – blaming our elected politicians for the mess we are in.

In today's global village, it is becoming apparent that the conflicting behaviors of our subgroups of communities and nations are having severe difficulties in joining in a collective approach to planetary dangers.

The challenges to changing people's perceptions, beliefs and behaviors are considerable. Telling people what the problems are and suggesting, arguing, urging, warning or even imploring them to change their views, understanding and behaviors produces very limited effects. Most people leave these issues of public policy, economics and ecology in the hands of elected officials, whose event horizons rarely extend beyond their next election campaign date. Furthermore, these elected officials respond to lobbyists, pressures and economic incentives (translate that term as 'bribes') from those who have the resources to spend a lot of time and money on promoting their self-interests.

Do not change your beliefs because you want other people to change theirs. Change your beliefs because your new beliefs announce more accurately who you are.

Yet even as you change, do not be surprised if other people change, and if the world around you changes. For the change in you will act as a catalyst in producing change in others. Not because you have sought to produce change in others, but, more probably, because you have not.

- Neale Donald Walsch

The first avenue to change is to encourage each person to work on herself or himself. This can be a slow and difficult process – both in awakening people to the needs and methods for self-growth, and then in developing approaches for applying what they have learned for healing themselves, their communities and our planet.

This is a slow process for transforming sufficient numbers of people to effect changes that will ensure sufficient healing effects to save our planet from destruction. Many in the healing community intuit that large numbers may not be necessary in order to reach a tipping point of sufficient influence to bring about the healing our planet. Personally, I think this is a risky intuitive belief on which to stake the future of all life on Earth.

I believe there are ways we can extend the first avenue into more potent collective actions. For instance:

- In Germany and in countries in Scandinavia, many people have been voting for years at the checkout counter for Green products. They simply refuse to purchase merchandise that is not recyclable, packaged in recyclable packaging. Within a short period of time, manufacturers and distributors caught on and responded with new designs that conformed to voters' wishes.
- In many parts of Canada around where I live, stores are charging 5 or 10 cents for a plastic bag, while simultaneously selling reasonably priced, reusable cloth shopping bags. In short order, almost everyone has become conscious of the horrendous waste of resources in using plastic bags and in the environmental kindness of not glutting landfills with plastic bags.
- At the Hillside Festival in Guelph, Ontario, the organizers arranged to have a tanker available with drinking water from the City of Guelph. The 5,000 people who attended all used their own, reusable bottles or plastic cups to drink. The same applied to beer and wine that were sold at kiosks. ALL food was served on washable plastic plates. An army of volunteers washed these between meals. They estimated they avoided trashing 70-80,000 plastic bottles alone in the 2 days and 1 evening of the Festival.
- A 5 year-old girl started a program in her kindergarten class for collecting discarded drinking cans as a way of providing meals for the homeless in San Francisco (Phoebe). So far she has raised over \$4,000 and provided over 18,000 meals.

Tracking positive news and healing suggestions, rather than watching FOX, CNN and other media that focus on violence, crime and government propaganda can be transformative. Check out:

Daily Good <http://www.dailygood.org/more.php?n=3787>

Ecology Design blog <http://www.treehugger.com/>

Join a community of kindred spirits and develop your passions for contributing to healing our planet. The solutions found by groups by far and away are better than the solutions found by individuals within the groups (Surowiecki, 2005).

[Wiser Earth Community http://www.wiserearth.org](http://www.wiserearth.org)

[The Bioneers http://www.bioneers.org/](http://www.bioneers.org/)

- If you engage in self-healing practices and/or are a caregiver, you can extend your individual healings to invite healing through the collective consciousness. Hopefully, if enough people do this, [we can heal the collective post-traumatic stress disorder](#) (PTSD) of humanity (Benor 2009a; 2009b).

Such programs are not only [helpful in direct environmental](#) kindness. More importantly, they raise individual ecological awareness in the broader community. They also generate awareness of our collective consciousness through working in groups (Surowiecki, 2005).

Hopefully we will come up with more such innovative, awareness-enhancing programs for planetary healing.

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