

Lies of the Heart & Soul

The work that brought me to this new reality, with a simple affirmation when the negative soundtrack of “I did”. If it is tied to a specific memory to be able to honestly say, “I did the best I could.” Working with people is messy. Spirituality is messy. Life is messy. When you enter into the hamster wheel of servant hood coupled with learned helplessness you can feel and believe there is no way out. Your being, will find a way out for you. The trick is listening before the way out becomes terminal.

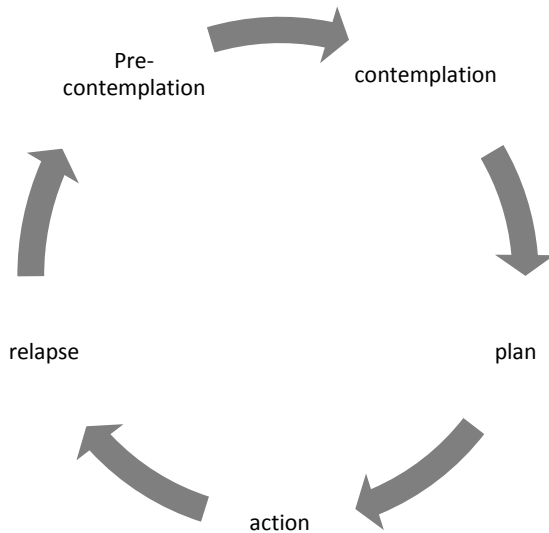
Throughout this jaunt of the journey, I had achieved peace in my soul with myself. I had gained a better understanding of the paths of the ancestors I stood upon. Though still haunted by the traumas of the past that the PNES had fully unleashed, now like an old XT Computer boot disc with dust on the film so it skips pieces. I am not fully rebooted.

Through writing and reading I am almost as good as I once was. Which to explain my multi-layered brain was strange and brilliant. It feels good to feel almost full functionality, as I entered into the PTSD clinic intake, I would say I was about roughly stabilized at 65% of my former self. My goal to show my mind was re-wired for emotion, and not conversion disorder was 45 days episode free.¹ Intake day, was day 28 (4 weeks free), the longest I had gone since my 39th birthday.

It started with mulling (prayer if you will), then moved to getting the right supports around you, and finally, action (for those unfamiliar with mystic or monastic Christianity, our actions are worship—the healing journey is worship).

It truly was a spiritual equivalent to the Stages of Change, a model where we enter at pre-contemplation, but can enter/re-enter at any stage. Pre-Contemplation is when you are not able or ready to work a healing plan for change:

¹ 6 months episode free is usually when remission is verified.



Contemplation is when you begin to think about change. Within the province I live, we are in a grief cycle over the loss of oil and gas as a staple industry as the world changes. The change is a hope response to ending climate change that is the abuse of creation we were entrusted with by the Holy Mystery, when we entered adolescence as a creation and left the Garden of Eden as the ancient story tells us. We became aware of pain, menses, and hard work. We became aware of good and evil, that is morality and ethics. It was time to leave and go into the world, a world we were entrusted with as caretakers, and were blessed with.

Alberta, entered contemplation on Election Night 2015 when we elected the New Democratic Party as our government after 44 years of Progressive Conservative governance. From 2015-2019 there was work in the plan phase, laying out what needed to happen for a new reality, and action, that is starting to do the steps. Good things were accomplished for the citizens in spite of being in a recession, and a resource that was never going to bounce back to historic levels. Individuals who had lost jobs that were never going to return as the Oil Industry had streamlined, and computerized to a level that eliminated jobs. It meant the six figure camp jobs were vanishing, and this is where relapse truly set in. With the reality that change was here and there was a group that did not like it. Like with any change.

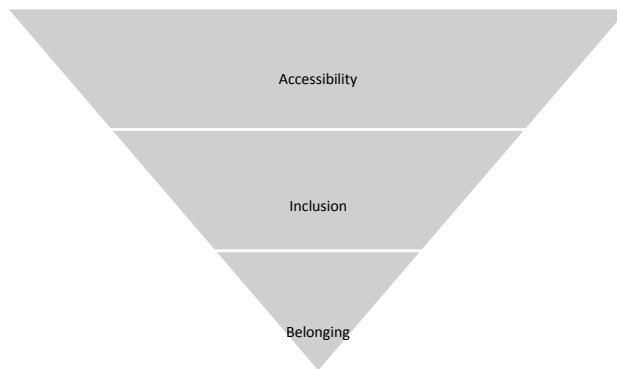
In the church- mainline, evangelical, North American charismatic-Pentecostal and even mega-church, it is the death of Christendom. The new realities that the church has to offer something different to attract, retain, and grow disciples. The plug and play programs, the removal of the mystery to appeal to those who are “unchurched” or “seeker” has not worked. It is a time of relapse for some, as they fall back into those plans for it is easier than to delve into the depths of healing work for a community. It is easier that teaching and spiritual formation.

Both examples are showing that relapses are part of change and grief. For some, it makes no difference, life spans of certain jobs or churches are finite. Yes, even the church that closed its doors after 120 years. That was its life cycle. It comes down to questions to be asked of legacy.

What does Alberta want to be known for? What does the church want to be known for? Is it hate or anger or hope or love?

It is a gut check question one entering into healing or any journey of life needs to ask. What do I want to be known for? Or better yet, and yes this works for institutions and provinces as well, who am I?

It was a gut level question that arose early in my episodes. Could I go back to work? Yes, there was a lot of crap in the sector. But as we have noted there was good things I had been a part of. Seeing healing, recovery from addiction, baptisms, weddings, birthdays, life point celebrations, families reconciled, true healing...and individuals coming home that is truly finding a space for belonging.



It is the Belonging Pyramid. What came through while I was struggling with my own healing and being trapped in mystery? It sadly is how our world functions. As we are focused on funding cycles, and proving quantitative results² it leaves us to focus on accessibility, that is physically is our structure usable for most (by building code), aesthetically welcoming. The majority is focused on this.

The next layer that is inclusion is what systems such as housing first, seeker sensitive are based on. The circle is drawn wide enough so that everyone has a space. What is missing is you may have a chair in the service, or a sparsely furnished apartment, but are you connected? Rooted? Or is it simply another place you go in the course of your day?

One of the most heart breaking moments working in shelters was the recidivism that is relapse back into homelessness. Talking to the gentlemen and ladies that returned from being housed the story was the same, they were lonely.

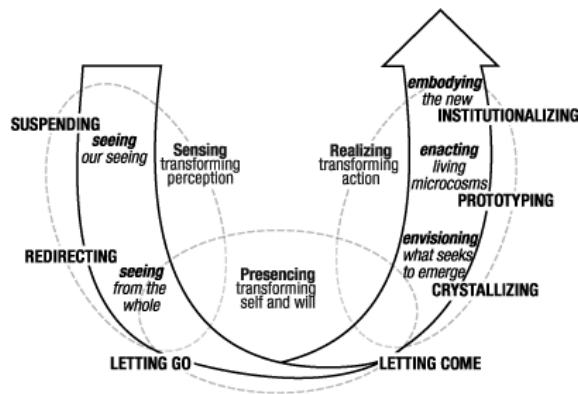
Battling loneliness brings us to the tip of the inverted pyramid and the hardest, messiest thing to achieve for a person and community: Belonging. It is the greatest risk of humanity. It is interdependence. It is being in mutuality. The risk is simple, you are rooted and a part of something, when you are gone you are missed. When someone else is gone that you know, you miss them. See those pesky emotions.

² Data, hard numbers showing efficacy of a program.

Belonging is the heart of the Gospel of Brother Jesus whether told by the Gnostics, A Course in Miracles, A Course of Love or the Christian Testament Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We just miss it because we have industrialized religion, and as such, specialized it down to a singular altar call with an unbiblical prayer, to show that we are “saved”.

It is belonging as well that creates a new understanding in grieving, change and healing. It led me back to Senge, et al’s theory of change from their 2004 book, *Presence*. A resource introduced to me by my then Spiritual Director, John Griffiths at Spiritual Directions in Calgary (I also did some teaching there). It literally is the person, community or institution being present during change and given language to map and discuss where the whole and the individual are at.

The U Theory:



© Peter Senge, C. Otto Scharmer, Joseph Jaworski, Betty Sue Flowers. *Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future*. Cambridge, Mass.: Sol., Society for Organizational Learning, 2004. Page 225.

It is the journey of suspending what you know. Redirecting the direction of self (group); the hardest piece is letting go of what was. This is where many groups or individuals will cycle back, why? The unknown is scary; fear is a great motivator to remain frozen. It is the third “f” of the Flight or Fight response. This was the theory I worked through as I wrestled with “who am I?”

Crushed by feelings of failure and inadequacy for all I could remember is the trauma, the loss, the failure, not the good. Challenged as everyone’s focus was to get me triaged and patched up like a good soldier and back in the trenches, okay check that, the medical profession after I left the Emergency Room and began working with the specialists and my family were focused on getting me healthy, back to a new normal.

In the new normal I could do what Nehemiah did in rebuilding the wall. Do the work in the trenches of healing for myself (love self); and when ready go to a higher plain to see the full picture.

Nehemiah

A book in the Old (Hebrew Bible) Testament of the Holy Bible. Part of the Holy Stories of the

Jewish Faith. It is a leadership parable of rebuilding. Leaving a time of exile and captivity, Israel is rebuilding the protection walls of Jerusalem.

It is the crux of seeking outside help to build up my affirmations to challenge the negative soundtrack of my brain of failure. It was to get to a place of letting go.

So at the bottom of the “U” where I enter treatment for the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, I can be Presenting of what was and is in my therapy and healing.

This then allows for letting come what is to be, where one attempts or tries out new ways of being, until the new reality cements in. Think of this time as the time it takes to shift a habit or mindset. The letting come and change can happen sooner for an individual than a group. But it can also take longer, for it is within this time and space that the core descriptor of a person is challenged.

What does that mean? What are the first questions asked when you meet someone?

What do you do for work?

Here I was working on letting go, but letting go meant what for how I was seen in society.

Compartmentalization

End of shift rituals, whether in housing first, journalism, politics, shelter work or church that left the day of work at work, and made me able to enter into daily life with family and friends. The lie to self was that I had removed the burden.

In fact what it had created was a vast mind palace with many secret passageways, cellars, attics and sheds that hid much. It allowed two or three prongs of life to progress in a failed attempt to keep protecting my loved ones from the insidious cancer of vicarious trauma. It worked, for a while. Sadly, one of the things that had to be let go in the PNES healing, was this mind palace. Now fully in ruins, and needing to be rebuilt as an interior castle that was open concept and of universal design for full emotional, spiritual, physical and mental integration.

The journey of rebuilding continues...