Creating Spirals of Positive Partnership
A Course in Developmental Team Coaching

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Purpose of Course No. 2

- In this section, we address four topics:

  1. How to put greater depth and quality into the sense- and meaning-making of teams, connected to an inquiry into broadening the aware self, the curious self, and the appreciative self.

  2. How to rewire sense-making processes to uncover the part team members play in creating problems for team synergy (managing interpersonal dynamics).

  3. How to raise the creativity, decision making quality, and communication within and between teams.

  4. The previous three goals coalesce in the main issue addressed: How to manage key processes, above all, **creating conversations** that allow learning from collective experience.

Four Topics of Cognitive Coaching

According to C. Thornton, team interventions are directed to the relationship between team goals and the team's capacity to carry them out. For this author, there are three possible areas of focus:
1. clarifying the team's goals
2. assessing the team's capacity to collaborate to achieve the goal
3. securing team members' skills in doing the required work.

From a developmental point of view, (1) is largely a cognitive issue [how the goals are thought about], (2) is a social-emotional issue [how level of meaning making sets limits to capacity to collaborate], while (3) consists of learning issues that change with the cognitive and social-emotional level of development of team members [procedural knowledge].

From the developmental perspective of CDF, one would add a fourth focus of team coaching:
4. increasing a team's maturity through cognitive interventions regarding HOW to think, not primarily WHAT to think, gradually moving from *declaration to debate to discussion to dialog*.

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Learning Teams

- Some teams are or become capable of team learning in their attempt to solve problems collaboratively in dynamic and complex situations.

- Because such teams achieve effects that an individual team member is unable to accomplish, we call such teams *synergistic*.

- Given the nature of team work, it is ultimately the quality of conversations that make a team synergistic.

- We propose that it is conversations of a "dialectical" nature that make teams synergistic.

Characteristics of Synergism in Teams

- Team members are willing to suspend their judgment long enough to hear other perspectives.

- They ask good questions to identify the viability of their and others' ideas.

- They think systemically about unceasing change in their own and others' world.

- They draw connections from seemingly disparate sources of information or knowledge.

- They maintain a big-picture mindset and avoid jumping from one problem or perspective to another.

- They pay attention to patterns that help them form a framework for understanding problems in depth.

- They seek to establish a shared vision that captures an issue's complexity.

Developmental Foundations of Synergistic Teams

Synergistic team functioning has both social-emotional and cognitive characteristics, shown below. These characteristics can be produced in a team's *zone of proximal development* where a leader and/or coach is guiding team members beyond what they can do for themselves, individually.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS*	
Aspect	**Traits Specific to Level**
Motivation	*Basic motivation for belonging to team*
Values	*Nature of values held by team members*
Role of team membership	*Personal status related to status within the team*
Self-validation	*Team members' way of self-confirmation within the team*

* To be distinguished from psychological characteristics

COGNITIVE CHARACTERISTICS	
Aspect	**Traits Specific to Level**
Motivation to see the Big Picture (C)	*Cognitive need to think systemically within and beyond the team*
Role Account-ability and Value Add (P)	*Adaptation of own accountability level to needs of the team as a whole (value-add to team's work)*
Own Role in relationship to team (R)	*Understanding of the intrinsic relatedness of a team member to the team as a whole as common ground*
Epistemic Openness (T)	*Cognitive resources for curiosity and transformational agency*

How versus What in Thinking

- We all tend to be fixated on the content, in contrast to the structure, of our thinking.

- While Western logic provides a very simple structure of thinking (learned by 25 years of age), Asian as well as Western dialectic provides a much more complex structure of thinking which can be symbolized by Yin-Yang.
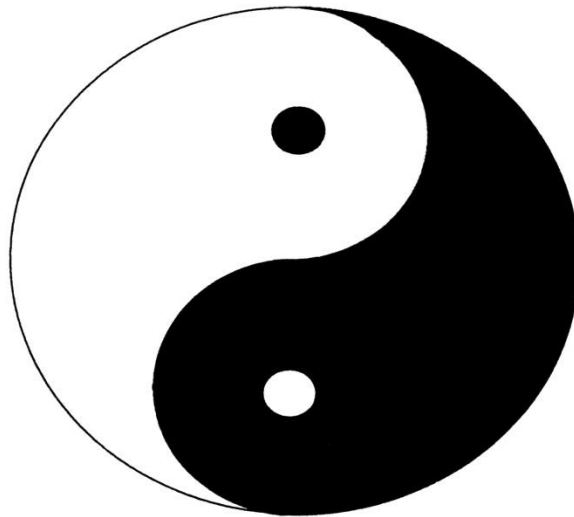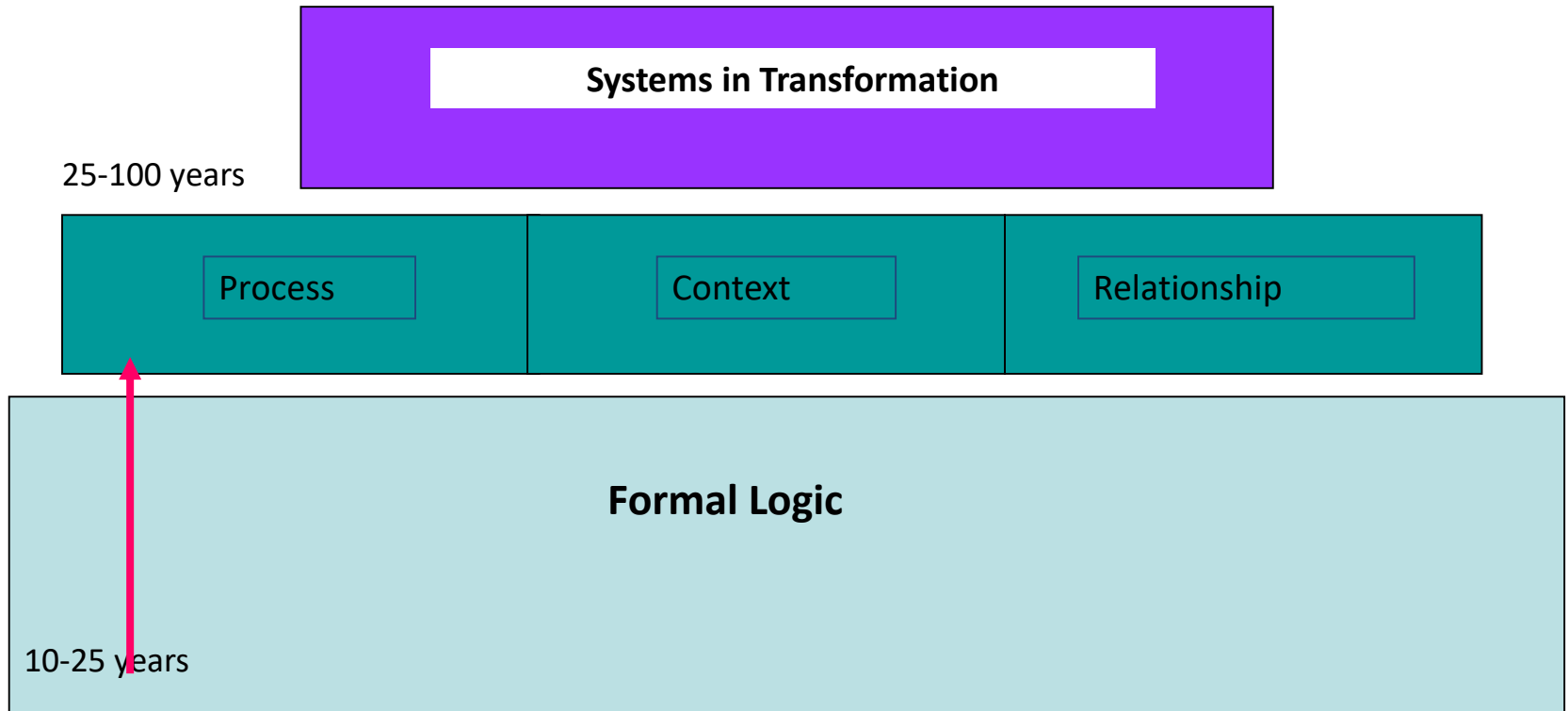
Approximating Yin-Yang in Thinking

- **Yin-Yang shows two energy fields conjoined by the reflection (replication) of one in the other. The world is seen in terms of continuous substances that are constantly changing, rather than as a set of object having attributes.**

- We can approximate Yin-Yang in our Western thinking by "analyzing" it "logically" into four moments of dialectic, in CDF called "context" [C], "process" [P], "relationship" [R], and "transformation" [T] in CDF.

- Research in the development of adult thinking in the West shows that these four moments of dialectical thinking emerge gradually over individuals' life span.

- We can best understand the gradual inclusion of the four moments of dialectic as a shift from the WHAT to the HOW of thinking, that is, to the instantaneous mental processes that occur and can be observed.

- In this course, we work with you to promote a shift to thinking HOW by way of synergistic conversations.

From WHAT to Think to HOW to Think

While we cannot "push" team members to a higher social-emotional level of meaning making, or "change" their psychological profile, we can scaffold the development of their deep thinking once formal logical thinking is mature at age 25. **We do so by helping team members transition from "what" they think to "how" they think what they think, regardless of what the content of their thinking may be.**

Systems in Transformation

25-100 years

| Process | Context | Relationship |

Formal Logic

10-25 years

Western vs. Asian Thinking Patterns (Nisbett, 2003)

- Research in the "geography of thought" on planet Earth has shown a deep divide between Western logic and Asian dialecticism.
- While Westerners think in an "Aristotelian" way, focused on *logic, objects, and rules* governing them, Asians (especially Chinese) think in terms of Yin-Yang and Confucius, putting the emphasis on the *big-picture, the whole, and on relationships between parts of the whole.*
- While Asians today learn Western logic, Westerners have not even begun to acquaint themselves with Western dialecticism.
- Western dialecticism in its newest, contemporary form is based on the moments of dialectic called "context" [C], "process" [P], "relationship" [R], and "transformation" [T] in CDF.

The Four Moments of Dialectic in CDF

CRITICAL THINKING

PROCESS [P]	RELATIONSHP [R]

CONSTRUCTIVE THINKING

CONTEXT [C]	SYSTEMS IN TRANSFORMATION [T]
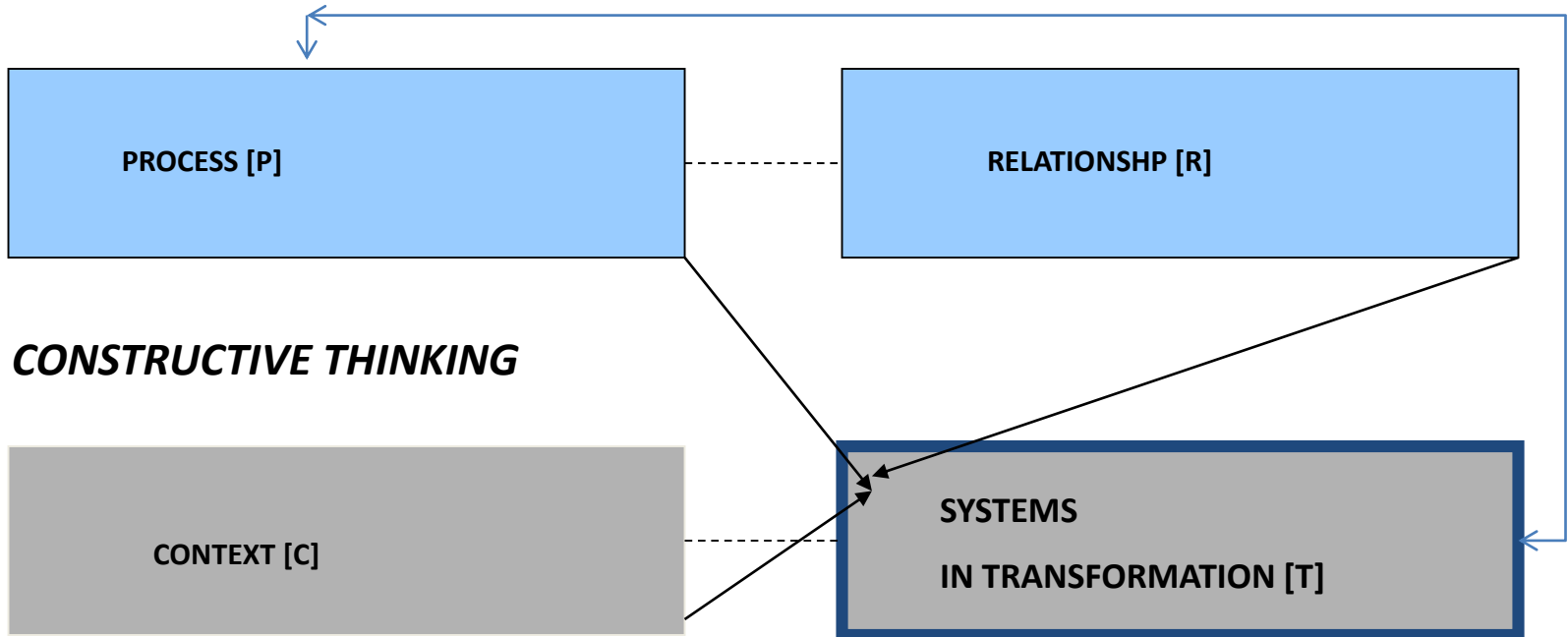
The moments of dialectic are complementary aspects of reality that one can consciously focus on in "thinking through" and "reflecting on" a subject matter. This requires dialog, not just discussion or debate.

Transformation is a Meta-Level

- The only moment of dialectic residing on the level of Yin-Yang is that for Transformation.

- The other three moments (C, P, R) have the purpose of *elucidating absences*, -- aspects of a problem that is neglected, not thought about, or not considered to be there.

- In this sense, using transformational thought forms equates to thinking fully dialectically.

- Therefore, we can consider C, P, and R thought forms as tools for locating, and engaging with, transformational issues and opportunities.

- In most cases, these are deeply veiled and need to be brought to light.

Analysis of a Team Member's Inquiring System and Meaning Making

Result of the cognitive interview measured in terms of Bhaskar's four moments of dialectic		
Fluidity of Thinking	Use and Frequency of Thought Forms	Discrepancy Index
F = 27 (= 22.7 % of Optimum)	Prozess: (9) = 43% Context: (6) = 29% Relation: (8) = 38% Transformation: (4) = **19% (level of dialectical thinking)**	R+P : C+T = 17 : 10

Result of the social-emotional interview measured in terms of Kegan's stage theory							
S-3	S-3(4)	S-3/4	S-4/3	S-4(3)	S-4	S-4(5)	S-4/5
			1	2	8	1	
S-4 {3: 8: 1}							

This team member has a cognitive score of **C = [43, 29, 28; 19 (%)]** and a social-emotional score of **S-4 {3 : 8 : 1}.** She is therefore considered to be in phase 2 of dialectical thinking development and solidly anchored in self-authoring. This makes her eligible for a Stratum IV or even V position in an organization, in terms of Size of Role.

Dialectic as a Model of Synergistic Conversations in Teams

- When *thinking about* a subject matter in terms of the four moments of dialectic making up Yin-Yang, you have at your disposal 4 different sets of "alternative", and at the same time "complementary", thinking patterns.

- As a team member, you thus have the opportunity to re-think what you hear, and/or what you observe yourself thinking, in multiple ways.

- This empowers you to reflect on what others are saying in a powerful and collaborative way, -- as long as you can manage to stay focused on their train of thought, rather than jumping trains or defensively driving your own counter-train.

- In short, there emerges an opportunity for DIALOG.

Four Group Exercises on a Shared Topic

- The group chooses a topic that has members' shared interest.

- One of the group members presents what is for him/her problematic in the chosen topic, what is at issue.

- Group members engage in depth with the speaker's presentation, foremost in order to "understand" what the speaker "means" and is keeping implicit.

- Staying with the speaker, they are "inter-viewing" him or her to elicit deep reflection and supporting it in turn.

- Since everybody can partake, this "inter-viewing" brings into existence a growing body of insights into the topic.

- The group can finalize the dialog by summarizing what emerged, and then taking action for the sake of "solving" what "the problem" was found to look like.

CDF Context Thought Forms (C)

Stable configurations that appear as a stratified "big picture" momentarily able to withstand unceasing change …

As Bhaskar says about Context (1993, 392):
Its dialectics are characteristically of stratification and ground, but also of inversion and virtualization. Its meta-critiques turn on the isolation of the error of de-stratification.

In other words, what is real is stratified and, through changes it undergoes, can become "inverted" and "virtualized," taking on new forms. **The principal human error in thinking Context is to lose sight of its stratification.**

Thought Forms Articulating CONTEXT

8. Focus on contextualizing a part within a whole; emphasis on part	Attention to organized wholes of which something is a part or element.
9. Focus on equilibrium of whole; emphasis on whole	Attention on the balance of a larger whole; the way it forms a Gestalt. Holistic perspective.
10 Focus on structures, functions, layers defining social systems	System descriptions in historical, functional, structural, mechanical, or in terms of strata or levels composing a whole
11. Focus on the hierarchical nature of structures and layers systems comprise	Description of the nature of hierarchy in systems or lack thereof. Emphasis on inclusion and transcendence of lower levels.
12. Focus on stability of system functioning	Describing or explaining the smooth functioning of a system with focus on its stability.
13. Focus on intellectual systems: frames of reference	Describing the larger philosophical or ideological environment of assumptions, ideas, principles, paradigms.
14. Focus on multiplicity of contexts (non-transformational)	Attention to a variety of contexts or dimensions in which events, situations, individuals are embedded (without stressing their relationship or transformation).

Group Exercise 1: Context
[Basic fallacy: De-Stratification]

- Focus on the topic in terms of TF 8-9 (part and whole)

- Try to view the main issue as a system composed of functions, layers, substructures (which may be hierarchical)

- Try to explain for makes for the apparent stability of the system you are describing, whether physical, social, or intellectual

- Try to view the entire system as composed of different contexts that are linked without seeing them as intrinsically connected.

- Your potential greatest error/fallacy in context is to neglect that systems are stratified, thus have multiple layers.

CDF Process Thought Forms (P)

Unceasing change in terms of how things emerge into being and vanish into non-being ...

Bhaskar, for whom reality is punctuated by absence, states (1993, 392):
2E [Process] is unified by the category of absence, from which the whole circuit of 1M-4D links and relations[that is, C>P>R>T] can be derived. ... Its dialectics are typically of process, transition, frontier and node, but also generally of opposition including reversal. Its metacritics pivot on the isolation of the error of positivization [that is, arresting of motion, OL] ...

Thought Forms Articulating PROCESS

1 Focus on unceasing movement, hidden dimensions, negativity	Expression/awareness of unceasing change, past/future in present, hidden dimensions
2. Use of preservative negation (inclusion of antithesis or 'other')	Seeing change as canceling, including, and transcending what is, leading to differentiation of events through inclusion of what they exclude, thereby broadening conceptual space.
3. Focus on composition by inter-penetrating opposites, correlates	Emergence of something new from an interchange of (opposite) energies or ideas. Figure and ground.
4. Focus on ongoing interaction creating patterns of movement	Patterns of motion in interactive relationships. Processes of 'give and take' bringing about a shift.
5. Focus on the active, practical nature of knowledge	Practical, interactive character of knowledge as always under construction, never absolute.
6. Critique of arresting motion and process [reification]	Assertion of the relevance of movement, and critique of attempts to deny, hide, disavow change. What exists is a form, not a thing.
7. Focus on embeddedness in process, movement	Focus on the fact that what happens is embedded in an ongoing process, on past and future as an aspect of the present.

Group Exercise 2: Process
[Basic Fallacy: Arresting of Motion]

• Focus on the topic in terms of TF 1, investigating the consequences of seeing it as being in unceasing motion, irreversible change

• The focus on what may be a hidden element or an apparent anti-thesis, for the sake of moving beyond it to a higher-level synthesis (TF 2)

• Investigate whether perhaps the topic is informed by forces and counter-forces that together determine its shape and meaning (TF 3)

• Alternatively, ask yourself whether the two (or more) opposing elements may not be interacting in such a way that there emerge patterns of interaction between the two sides or elements (TF 4)

• Now focus on how the interactive or oppositional nature of the issue actively engages you, enabling you to intervene to direct ongoing change (TF 5)

• Become aware of ways of thinking focusing on arresting the motion you are busy to engage with and understand (TF 6)

• Try to assess how the issue is embedded in broader and deeper processes than you have so far been aware of, arriving at a dynamic "big picture" of the issue (TF 7). [You have just arrived at a whole and its parts].

CDF Relationship Thought Forms (R)

Unity in diversity that shows how what is different is different only relative to a shared commonality that includes all differences (common ground) …

Bhaskar states (1993, 392)
3L [Relationship is] unified by the category of totality; it pinpoints the error of ... the hypostization of thought. It encompasses such categories and themes as reflexivity, ... holistic causality, internal relationality, and intra-activity [reciprocity], but also de-totalization [neglecting totality], alienation, split and split-off, illicit fusion and fission. ... Its dialectics are of center and periphery, form and content, figure and ground, ... retotalization in a unity-in-diversity. Its metacritics pivot on the identification of de-totalization. There is a special affinity with 1M [Context] since totality is a structure.

Thought Forms **Articulating** RELATIONSHIP

15. Limits of separation. Focus on existence and value of relationship.	Assertion of the existence of relationship(s), pointing to common ground and the difficulty of separating things from each other beyond certain limits.
16. Focus on value of bringing into relationship.	Assertion of the value of seeing a relationship between things or forms otherwise seen as separate.
17. Critique of reductionism, unrelated discretes, and de-totalization; neglecting common ground	Critique of de-totalizing reality by neglecting relationships between opinions, assumptions, ideas leading to a reduction of complexity, overlooking underlying shared frameworks, thus common ground. Critique of absence of holistic thinking.
18. Focus on relatedness of different value and judgment systems	Assertion of the relatedness of seemingly different, even opposed values, judgments, ideas, principles, stressing cultural commonalities.
19. Focus on describing relationships in structural terms	Focusing on what is the formal structure of a relationship (or relationships) in order to locate the essence of how things are related.
20. Focus on describing patterns of interaction in relationships	Describing a pattern of interaction and influence in a relationship, emphasizing the pattern(s) of interaction between the elements that are in relationship.
21. Focus on describing the constitutive relationship that determines the nature of what is in relationship.	Describing a relationship as 'constitutive' or making the parts it relates be what they are. Emphasis on the logical priority of the relationship over the elements it relates.

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Group Exercise 3: Relationship
[Basic Fallacy: De-Totalization]

• Return to two (or more) different aspects of the topic, to realize that by distinguishing them you have implicitly also connected them as sharing a common ground (TF 15)

• Explore why seeing them as related is highly valuable for better insight (TF 16)

• Remain critical of attempts to reduce the whole issue to one of its elements, a frequent logical fallacy (TF 17)

• In terms of value, focus on the cultural common ground of seemingly opposing ways of evaluating the issue (TF 18)

• Go deeper and describe the relationships you are focusing on great detail (TF 19)

• Beyond your present focus on relationships between different elements, search for patterns of interactions that are crucial for the relationships of concern to you (TF 20)

• Now ask yourself whether there could be "constitutive relationships" that override in importance or consequence all other relationships you have been trying to explore (TF 21)

CDF Transformational Thought Forms (T)

Equilibrium created in thought and action by integrating different, even opposing, systems, based on human agency ...

The T-moment (Bhaskar's 4D, fourth dimension, 1993, 393):.. is unified by the category of transformative praxis or agency. In the human sphere, it is implicit in the other three [that is, C, P, and R; OL]. Metacritically, it pinpoints two complementary kinds of ... de-agentification – dualistic disembodiment and reductionist reification. There is a special affinity with 2E [Process], since agency is (intentional) causality which is absenting. ... [4D = T dialectic is often] ... the site of ideological and material struggles ...

Thought Forms Articulating TRANSFORMATION

22. Focus on limits of stability, harmony, and durability	Pointing to limits of stability, balance, and durability without making their causes explicit. (Emphasis is on the 'negative' aspect of negativity which also has a positive aspect, that of emergence.)
23. Value of conflict leading in a developmental direction	Value of the conflict itself and the resolution of conflict in a developmental or transformative direction, leading to dissolution of older forms and systems.
24. Value of developmental potential leading to higher levels of functioning, integration and social change	Value of developmental movement (with or without conflict) for the sake of transformation, establishing a new balance, greater inclusiveness.
25. Evaluative comparison of systems in transformation	Holding systems side by side as forms, and evaluating them as to effectiveness, usefulness, adaptability, and as mutually sustaining.
26. Focus on process of coordinating system	Attention to the process of coordinating two (or more) systems with each other for the sake of bringing them into balance.
27. Description of open, self transforming systems	Emphasizing the equilibrium and ability of a living system to remain 'itself' based on unceasing transformation; pointing to a formal aspect of identity-in-transformation.
28. Integration of multiple perspectives in order to define complex realities; critique of formalistic thinking.	Critiquing the one-sidedness of abstractions; preserving concreteness and realism by juxtaposing one or more perspectives on the same subject matter.

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Group Exercise 4: Transformation (Yin-Yang)
[Basic Fallacy: De-Agentification; Freezing Transformation]

• Focus on the emergent qualities of the issue that show it is best to consider the issue as a transformational system (of systems) of limited stability, harmony, and duration (TF 22)
• Notice defining contradictions, oppositions, or conflicts that point to an emergent developmental potential for intervention and agency (TF 23)
• Extrapolate what this potential might consist of or look like (TF 24)
• Are there systems the present one could be compared to, or is there a counter-system with which it could beneficially be merged? (TF 25)
• If indeed there were a counter-system, how could the two systems be merged? (TF26)
• Investigate whether the issue you are dealing with does not ultimately point to an open, living system that is by nature transformational (TF 27)
• Gather all the aspects of the issue you are aware of and bring them together dynamically, as intrinsically linked (TF 28)
• Develop a critique of formalistic notions of the issue that separate content from structure (laws from what they apply to) (TF 28)

How To Use Dialectic
as a Model for Creating Positive Partnerships

- We have seen and experienced that dialectical thinking opens new vistas for developing synergistic teams through conversations that are explicit and inclusive at the same time.

- We can sense that the personal stance on which dialectical thinking relies is not just one of "benefit of the doubt" but an eagerness of every team member to see "the whole picture".

- We also sense that dialectical conversations are able to gather thought and motivational energies that otherwise remain unrealized.

- This means that dialectical thinking broadens the aware self, strengthens the curious self, and empowers the appreciative self.

- **In short, "dialectical thinking in teams" is a new mode of conduct through which team members sign on to a different culture of dialog than declaration, debate, or even discussion can sustain.**

Dialog Differences in Upwardly and Downwardly Divided Teams

- The universe of discourse at different team levels is expectably structured very differently.

- Teams focusing on the here and now ('continuous improvement') have different concerns than teams evaluating end-to-end processes and reshaping business models.

- Each of these topics requires a different level of cognitive development, and is thus characterized by different degrees of dialog quality.

- In a downwardly divided team which is held hostage by a minority or majority of less-developed individuals, team challenges tend to be narrowed to the lowest common denominator.

- By contrast, in a upwardly divided team challenges are fully seen, dialectically explored, and become the basis of collaborative intelligence.

Interdevelopmental Institute

The Evidence Based Approach
to Team Coaching and Team Development

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