

observe how we are using our time, an approach that allows us to discover that we have more time available than we had realized. We then begin to welcome time into our lives and develop a genuine appreciation for the value and power of time.

In the Skillful Means training, there is a natural emphasis on planning as an aspect of using time well. The road to genuinely controlling time is not just to make a to-do list, but to enjoy challenging our abilities, respond positively to obstacles, and transform resistance and negativity. This is the road to mastering time. As we grow familiar with these three aspects of growth, we find that time has become our friend and ally: time is on our side.

Now we are ready to align the power of time with the energy of our embodiment. This causes a dramatic shift within us; once we stop seeing time as an outside force, the power of time can merge with our energy and become part of it. Linking energy, concentration, and mind, with time sharpens focus, refines communication, and elicits our full participation. As awareness incorporates the vitality of time, we enjoy abundant energy and gain access to timeless knowledge and wisdom. Supported by the power of time and embodying wisdom mind, we are capable of authentic leadership that accomplishes more benefit for the world than we ever thought possible.

## 14. SIX BILLION PATHS TO PEACE: Reflecting on the Power of Service and Leadership to Create Global Harmony

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### Introduction

In the book *If the World Were a Village* (2005), David Smith outlines what the global population of six billion would look like if shrunk down to a village of 100 people. Smith reports:

- 61 would be Asian, 13 African, 13 from North and South America, 12 Europeans, and one would be from the South Pacific.
- 17 would speak Chinese, 9 English, 8 Hindi and Urdu, 6 Spanish, 6 Russian, and 4 would speak Arabic. That would account for half of the village. The other half would speak Bengali, Portuguese, Indonesian, Japanese, German, French or some other language.
- 33 would be Christian, 19 believers of Islam, 13 would be Hindus, and 6 would follow Buddhist teaching. Five would believe that there are spirits in the trees and rocks and in all of nature. Twenty-four would believe in other religions, or would believe in no religion.<sup>1</sup>

Thinking of the world in this way challenges us to think about how we might treat each other if we knew everyone's name, where they lived and much more about who they are. It also challenges us to think about what commonalities we share. Finally, it challenges us to ask what kind of leadership would best serve this village.

The lotus flower is the symbol of our not-for-profit organization — and a symbol of the kind of leadership that we believe the world needs. It is our intention to help people bloom through serving others, in a way that brings joy and beauty while spreading greater peace and harmony throughout our world. Our hope is that by inviting people into the process of reflection and story-telling, they will connect more deeply to the way they bring their best selves into the world through service. It is about each individual path that people are taking to peace, and it is about the collective journey that we share as a world population of over six billion people. While we have many differences, we are all bound by a common desire to have greater peace and happiness.

Inside this chapter you will find four sections, each outlining parts of our philosophy of leadership. They include:

**Section One: The Power of Service.** This section provides an opportunity for you to reflect upon how engaging a perspective of service can change any situation from one that is full of conflict or challenge, to one that is harmonious and full of ease.

**Section Two: Creating Harmony Within Yourself.** In this section you can explore ways in which you can feel more at peace with the service and leadership that you do. Reflecting upon the connections between visible action and invisible beliefs, attitudes, values and tendencies will help you see how these connections can either result in greater harmony and joy, or lead to internal conflict, burnout or exhaustion.

**Section Three: Creating Harmony With Others.** In this section the reflection is focused on investigating your relationships and noticing how a perspective of service can bring about greater harmony.

**Section Four: Creating Harmony Between Groups or Communities.** Perhaps the most complex level on which to foster global harmony is the organizational and institutional. This section creates a process through which you can engage with others to reflect on commonalities as humans — to explore partnerships that can bring about greater global harmony through service.

Although these sections flow one to another, we believe the path to peace is a dynamic, non-linear process. In one moment the focus might be on our community; in another moment on ourselves. In one moment things flow and are in alignment; in another moment they feel stuck. We see the intention of this journey not as the achievement of an ultimate permanent peace, but an on-going practice of bringing it forth.

Perhaps the most important part of this journey is remembering our interconnectedness. If we each begin to ask ourselves, "In this situation, how can I be of service in the most meaningful way?" the presence of harmony will be widespread.

### **Section One: The Power of Service**

There is a Buddhist story of a boy who wants to learn more about heaven and hell. He is brought to the dinner table inside hell where he sees the most wonderful feast he has ever seen — delightful dishes of meat and fish and piles of fruit. Chairs were arranged on both sides and

chopsticks to eat with were neatly set upon the table. "How could this place be hell?" the boy wondered.

Then suddenly, appearing out of nowhere, hungry ghosts and spirits from the world of hell began to gather. They were all restless and making a big fuss. When all the spirits were finally seated, they began fighting for the chopsticks.

Then something strange happened. The chopsticks started to grow, becoming longer and longer, and longer, until they were all three feet long. The hungry ghosts tried to eat with their long chopsticks. But they couldn't. Even if they could pick something up, they couldn't put it into their mouths. After some time had passed, the red doors of the dining room opened, and a large, black gaping hole appeared. Mealtime was over. The hungry ghosts, still hungry, threw down their long chopsticks and slowly got up from the table.

Then he was taken to the dining room in Heaven. He noticed that everything looked exactly like the dining room in hell. "What's the difference?" he wondered. The boy looked closely and noticed that the pairs of chopsticks were already three feet long. Then quietly and with grace, happy-looking people started to gather around the table. "How are they going to eat with those long chopsticks?" the boy thought.

After sitting down, the people began picking up the food with their very long chopsticks and, instead of trying to feed themselves, they began putting it into the mouths of the people sitting on the other side of the table. They took turns feeding each other, giving the other person whatever they wanted to eat.

The boy was very touched. He then understood the difference between the two worlds — that caring about each other, not just your own self, is what made the dining room in heaven so wonderful and different from the one in hell.<sup>2</sup>

This story captures so much of why serving others is at the heart of our leadership philosophy. Our mission is to promote greater harmony among human beings, bring forth compassion and nurture future generations to build more caring communities. Our belief is that this mission can be actualized through a widespread participation by individuals in service, and thoughtful reflection that goes along with it.

In the story above, both groups of people — those in heaven and those in hell — were dealing with the same exact situation. The difference is that one group of people had the intention to serve each other, while the others were so self-focused that they could not enjoy the abundant life in front of them. One group of people lived together in harmony, the other in a state of conflict. Their perspective transformed the situation.

We believe that a service orientation to life provides all people with the opportunity for joy and peace. Because of this, we focus our work on nurturing service, especially in young people, and in promoting a certain kind of service that is based upon the alignment of an individual's heart, mind and actions.

#### *Activity #1: Developing "service-centered" leadership*

We begin this section by asking you to describe service in your own life. In using the guiding questions below, remember that we do not define service in the conventional way. Rather than viewing service as volunteerism or activism, *we see service as any action that is other-centered.* You might wash the dishes for a family member, visit a friend when they are sick, or let someone enter a line in front of you at the grocery store. *Rather than being a particular kind of action, we see service as the result of a particular type of intention.*

1. Tell a story of a time when you learned something about the value of service to others.
2. How have your ideas, beliefs or metaphors about serving others changed over time?
3. Tell a story of a time when someone did something for you that made a significant difference in your life.

#### **Section Two: Creating Harmony Within Yourself**

Many people think about service as an outward, tangible action — helping to build a house, cleaning up a riverbank or organizing a violence prevention project. These actions have amazing impacts on our communities and the world. However, we see service as a combination of both the external actions we take in the world, and the internal motivations that drive our actions. We hold the belief that the most meaningful form of leadership through service happens when a person is aligned — when their attitudes, beliefs and values line up with their heart and outward actions in a way that brings about maximum joy and energy.

Through continued cycles of action and reflection, you can refine your actions so that over time, your service-centered leadership gives you and the world more and more joy and energy.

By looking into what motivates you to serve and lead, you can make more conscious decisions about the actions you take. For a wide range of reasons, you might be serving because others want you to do it; because you want some particular reward, or because saying no is too difficult. There may be other things that you wish you could do, but feel too tired or busy to do them. Perhaps you don't feel skilled enough, or know where to start. This can cause internal conflict, tension, and stress that can lead to burnout or exhaustion. As you become more aware of the connections between your actions and your attitudes, beliefs, and values, you can learn to shift your perspectives or your actions so that service can become more meaningful to you.

At times, this reflection may cause some shake-up of your regular way of doing things. The result, however, is worth it. Once you are in greater alignment, your joy and energy ripples out to create more harmony in your home, your place of work, and your community.



To begin this reflection process, imagine yourself as a tree. The branches, leaves, flowers and fruit of the tree represent the outcomes of other-centered actions. They represent the specific ways in which you bring greater joy, harmony and energy to the world. Like the many types of trees, we as people grow and blossom in different ways. We are different sizes, we bloom at different times of the year, with varying growing periods and many different types of flowers and fruit. Some have no buds and other take several seasons to bloom.

The part of the tree that exists below the surface of the ground represents the inner dimensions of service — the attitudes, beliefs and values that root an other-centered approach to life. Some of us have an extensive root structure, while others have a less complex version. Some have root systems that are heavily interconnected to other trees,

others stand seemingly alone. These submerged, invisible dimensions of service are usually developed early in life through our experiences in our families, and religious, social, and cultural institutions. Often, they are unconscious until something inspires us to investigate ourselves more deeply.

The trunk of the tree represents the way in which the fruit and roots are connected. Inside the trunk, sap flows from the root systems up to the most distant bud to feed its growth. Our consciousness about the connections between our roots and fruit help us to act with purity and energy.

In the activity that follows, we invite you to investigate the invisible dimensions of your service-centered leadership and to look at how they affect your visible actions.

#### **Activity #2: Roots and fruit exploration**

Take a minute to draw a tree that represents the outward actions of service you offer with fruits, buds and leaves and the values you have gotten from your family, ancestors, community and social institutions with roots.

When Jodi sat down to create a tree that represented her service in the world, she immediately thought about caring for her grandmother every night, and her work in the after-school program. She had to take a minute longer to think about how she tries to drive very slowly and consciously, a habit of service she has cultivated over the years. Then it occurred to her that even the smallest act of saying hello to the postman everyday was something worth putting on her tree.

When she turned her reflection to her roots, she thought about her grandmother, who was a teacher and had a great love of learning. She also thought about the Catholic Church, and how it had instilled an early belief that serving others is important to have a meaningful life. As she dug deeper into her roots, she realized that coming from a family where alcoholism was an influence in home life, she had developed patterns that caused her to avoid painful feelings and situations by eating or drinking. With her service to others — when things got tough and when she overextended herself — she would begin eating and drinking in ways that were destructive to her health and well being.

Reflecting on your roots and your fruits is an activity that can begin anywhere and continue to expand and expand.

#### **Connecting the visible and invisible dimensions of service**

In addition to exploring the invisible dimensions of service, we invite you to consider how you can connect this dimension to your outward actions of leadership with greater awareness. This means bringing into harmony *the mind* — intellectual and cognitive thoughts and constructs; *the heart* — emotional and psychological aspects; and *action* — physical and tangible movements.

Most of us can relate to the feeling in our gut when we are doing something (action) that we know we don't agree with (mind). This is the feeling of being out of alignment. Through the process of conscious awareness, we correct the action, or we shift our way of thinking about the situation so that it creates greater harmony between our mind, our heart and our actions.

The awareness of "being in integrity" is a continual process. In each moment, factors in our internal and external environment change. We get sick, others come to lend us a hand, our beliefs change, our emotions change, and people around us do things that impact our day. We have to be flexible and adjust ourselves to move with these shifts. Sometimes this requires us to have a new relationship to our thoughts, emotions or sensations in our bodies. At times the shifts that are needed are huge, and life-altering. Most of the time they are not; they are minor adjustments that can be made on a very subtle level.

Ned, the Executive Director of a small non-profit organization, was having a crazy day. It was 3 pm before he even had lunch. At 5 pm a board member called to see if he could talk about the upcoming board meeting over drinks that night. He felt pressure to respond because he had been trying to reach this board member for weeks and the issue was a big one, so he said yes. As soon as he hung up the phone, his stomach began to churn. He hadn't seen his 2-year-old son all day, and getting home to put him to sleep was one of his great joys.

Ned valued working hard on behalf of kids in public schools for his job, but he also valued his commitment with his son for bedtime, because Ned's father was not there for him. His churning stomach reminded him that something was off about his decision. He closed his office door for a moment and enjoyed a few moments of quiet. He reflected in the moment that his tendency to bend to others' needs was playing itself out in this situation. While he paused, he realized that he

hadn't asked the board member if they could meet a bit later for a cup of coffee after dinner. This way he could go home, be with his family for dinner and bedtime, and then walk to the neighborhood coffee shop. A few minutes later he hung up the phone smiling, because he had found a creative solution to serving in a way that honored his many values and desires.

This is one example of making small shifts that can bring you back into alignment. The most essential element of this process is deep knowledge of yourself. Knowing what you value, having a sense of your unique tendencies or patterns of behavior, and understanding some of the ways you get caught out of alignment are all very useful. With that knowing, as situations arise when you feel out of alignment, you can pause and take a moment to reflect upon what might be going on with your thoughts, emotions or actions. Then, you can remember to be flexible and creative. There are a million ways to re-align yourself.

### Section Three: Creating Harmony With Others

Creating harmony with others involves developing a global perspective, one which allows for many different ways of living. It is also about creating interpersonal dynamics that bring about compassion, respect and the highest potential of each person. Below is a Möbius strip, a symbol of a never-ending process. This is how we believe energy moves between individuals.



We view the relationship between two individuals as a dynamic on-going process of exchanging thoughts, feelings and actions. Our hope is that through reflection and action, individuals will see the impact they have on each other, and come into deeper harmony so that the energy between them flows more synergistically.

Each individual has a mind, a heart and action. To be in the greatest alignment, they must practice developing a good relationship between their own mind, heart and action and then they must be conscious of adjusting their thoughts, feelings and actions to be in harmony with others.

Tension or frustration develop between people on a regular basis. This unease often begins as a subtle interruption of the flow of compassion and respect, based upon self-centered thinking or a misunderstanding. It can easily lead to someone distancing themselves from another person, or avoiding the tension until it mounts into a more concentrated form.

Our belief is that people can work toward greater global harmony by seeing their interactions with others through their connection to service. From this perspective, when unease arises in you, you can offer your most compassionate self to the situation, and actively practice to bring the relationship into a fuller alignment. We call this process *adjustment*.

Adjustment within a relationship is the process of being conscious of the dynamics between yourself and another, and adapting your way of relating in a way that the other person can feel more comfortable and open. This may involve shifting communication styles, topics, body language and level of openness, based upon whatever information you have about that person. It does not mean you give up who you are, or your beliefs. It means you invite an other-centered perspective that allows you to trust yourself enough to be of service to another, while maintaining your sense of self.

This work of adjustment can be a challenging process at times. By sitting back and listening to a person with whom you disagree, you may fear that you are giving the indication that you agree with them. However, with a wider perspective, the relational field changes considerably. When you acknowledge that there are many ways to view a situation, there is no need for a defensive, "I'm right, you are wrong" stance. You can listen fully to another person's way of seeing the world, and then share your own.

Below is a process that can help you maximize harmony with another person. When there is already a positive flow of energy between you and another person, this process can incite more energy and keep it going. When there is a negative dynamic, it can help to free up blocks or re-establish positive energy. When little exchange is going on between two people, this can be a sign that little is being invested in the relationship, or that you are not "in sync" with their thoughts and feelings.

**Activity #3: Harmonizing with others****Appreciate the other person.**

Creating harmony and peace with another person takes effort and creativity. Neither of these will be present if you can't remember that the person, the relationship or harmony matter to you. When you can bring appreciation to a tension-filled situation, your heart opens and there is more room for possibilities and the easing of tensions. It can help to connect to something you have in common such as a value or a past experience.

**Investigate your experience.**

The more we get to know ourselves, the more awareness we can bring to a situation of tension. You may have had a bad experience with a teacher in the past, and as a result put up your guard every time someone tries to teach you something. You may feel physically or emotionally injured by an event. You may be clear that there is something you need to say. Whatever the case, clarifying what is going on for you will assist the process in easing tensions with another person.

**Detach from your experience.**

Once you have looked internally, detach from your experience and step away from it as much as you can. Invite the other person to tell their side of the situation. Try to open your heart and really let go of your view so that you can deeply hear the other person. Once your heart is open and you have listened fully to the other person, attempt to speak more authentically about the situation—to articulate your thoughts, feelings and reasons behind your actions.

**Initiate a gesture of harmony.**

At this point in the process you may not agree with the other person or have anything resolved. But from a global perspective, hopefully you have begun to understand a different view more fully, and you have created a greater possibility for the exchange of positive energy to flow between you. There are many ways to ease tensions in a relationship once you have deeply listened to another and shared your truth. It may be the gesture of an extended hand, a note, or a comment of gratitude that will open the door to greater understanding and harmony.

Sometimes the amount of negative energy or resistance to a person is very large. In this case, an equally positive amount of positive energy or openness is needed to re-establish a state of flow between two people. Another dynamic that arises is people

feeling justified in their resistance of another person because they feel they have been wronged or been a victim of oppression.

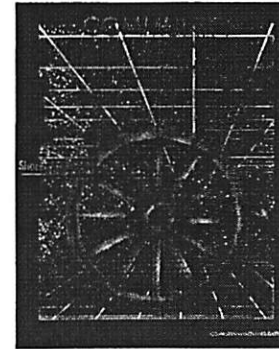
It is important to note that this process does not directly interrupt the dynamics of oppression or injustice, and it should not be done when a person is in physical or psychological danger. When in danger, you should do what you can to remove yourself from the situation. When you are the victim of on-going oppression, this approach gives you an opportunity to transform yourself, not necessarily the situation. By doing so, you may notice that you can focus on other, more fruitful and positive aspects of your life. Nelson Mandela is a shining example of this approach — while treated wrongly by others, he maintained an open heart and mind, and as a result was able to walk strong and shining from his jail cell to inspire people all over the world.

**Section Four: Creating Harmony Between Groups or Communities**

The alignment between communities or groups can be very challenging work for leaders at every level of society. Think of countries that have been warring for decades, or cities that have neighborhoods that have been in conflict with each other for as long as anyone remembers. On the other hand, alignment can be very simple when people remember the interconnectedness they share because they all inhabit the same planet, and because of common core values. We believe alignment is possible between communities when people focus on their shared core values.

Some people believe that there is conflict globally because people have different values. We believe differently. A cross-cultural study by Rushworth Kidder of the Institute for Global Ethics states five values that commonly surface across nationalities and religions when people are asked how they can root their decisions in moral values. They include: honesty, respect, responsibility, fairness and compassion. In addition, we believe that all people have a desire for happiness and for the experience of living fully. In the illustration on the next page, you see the spokes of a wheel and a hub that keeps the spokes united. We believe the hub of a wheel represents the core values that are shared within a community, and each spoke represents an individual.





A community may be a school, town, church, family, social club or other collection of people. Within a community, the group will only be as strong as the spokes that come together to support the hub of core values. Sometimes people need to be reminded of the values that bind them together with others. Sometimes they need to be encouraged to look beyond immediate conflicts or differences, to see the commonalities that are shared with other members of the group.

In addition to the dynamics within a community, every community is connected to other communities. The recognition of our interconnectedness is the beginning of a new journey towards global harmony.

To inspire reflection about our interconnectedness, we ask the question, "What is shared among all human beings?" And how do we use these commonalities to create common intentions and new partnerships based upon our service to each other?