

The Lamplighting Handbook



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The world needs your light.

The quantity of your shine doesn't matter. It's not about wattage. It's about effect. This Handbook contains ideas, tools, and principles for deepening that effect.

Those of us who desire a world of abundance, peace, inclusion, and justice—a world where delight and not horror is the characteristic mood—tend to focus on action: action through legislation, protest, resistance, organizing. These are needed. But they do not address inspiration, vision, dream, wisdom, story, art, ritual, or hope. Worldviews—our basic frameworks of meaning, purpose, relationship, and even selfhood—are left out of the picture.

Additionally, we often fail to dip into one of our greatest resources: imagination. Without a conscious relationship with imagination, we cannot plan, build, resist, relate, achieve, love, predict, or make change. Without imagination, we can't be fully human. How can we move toward what we can't imagine?

When we look deeply into implacable conflict, systemic injustice, or chronic passivity, we find constricted worldviews that block thought, skew perceptions, distort emotions, choke debate, and limit imagination. Sometimes our worldviews need therapy more than we do.

This Handbook is for current and aspiring leaders, healers, educators, activists, mentors, coaches, creatives, thought leaders, psychotherapists, and other change facilitators who feel called to go deeper into what makes for lasting social (and personal) transformation. The Handbook is also for burned-out activists as well as for curious readers with no activist experience at all.

As with [enchantivism](#), which makes change by showing publicly how things *could* be, the practices in this Handbook augment the mechanical/interventionist language of social change (march, protest, reform, pressure, confront, push, occupy, legislate) with an emphasis on tending, growing, reflecting, connecting, inspiring, and reenchanting. Our work rejoins reflection and action, emphasizes relationship-weaving, and summons the whole person.

Lasting change seldom comes about through heroic action alone. It arrives through a change in worldview brought by the people in the back, the ones mostly left out of the history books. In other words, you and me. To bring real change, we don't need millions of followers, vast amounts of money, armies, or corporate power. We can start by getting clear on a humane vision of what we want and joining others who want that too.

Although it is naïve to think that inner work automatically changes the world, tending the consciousness that births all lasting change remains paramount. In the Afterword of her novel *Tehanu*, Ursula K. Le Guin strikes a chord that inspires this Handbook:

There is a kind of refusal to serve power that isn't a revolt or a rebellion, but a revolution in the sense of reversing meanings, of changing how things are understood. Anyone who has been able to break from the grip of a controlling, crippling belief or bigotry or enforced ignorance knows the sense of coming out into the light and air, of release, being set free to fly, to transcend.

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1. What is Lamplighting?

How far that little candle throws its beams! So shines a good deed in a naughty world.
—Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*

Lamplighters are a new kind of change agent bringing cultural and personal illumination through deep imagination, possibility mentoring, storytelling, and applied wisdom. They are depth mentors who help uncover the hidden dream, vision, meaning, or calling in troubling events.

Lamplighting (also called *depth restorying* or *loreosophizing*) means supporting or making beneficial change by working wisely and imaginatively to expand a restricted guiding story. This kind of “worldview therapy” nudges us out of captivity to constricting narratives and into deeper and more liberating possibilities that bring inspiration, creativity, aliveness, fulfillment, resilience, and even a higher calling. It can be used by and with individuals, but its main purpose is to serve and support groups, including lamplighters. Lamplighting focuses on finding imagination, creativity, inspiration and infusing them into collective life.

Lamplighting can look like:

- Lifting the spirits of a disenchanted group with stories of resilience and determination moving despair in creative and hopeful directions;
- Inviting people to imagine how things *could* be, not just how things are, and to take such imaginings seriously as a direction for change;
- Getting opponents to know each other by inviting them to play a game together;
- Creating solidarity with a storytelling event that addresses some divisive difficulty;
- Encouraging the emotionally immature to visualize how a wise and mature person would act;
- Augmenting “shadow work” (exploration of one’s dark side) with examples of human beings at their best;
- Supplementing a group art project with a series of self-reflective exercises;
- Convening a *heartstead*, a circle for earnest conversation about an urgent concern and the frozen attitudes that create and maintain the problem;
- Reintroducing people to the forgotten folklore of their culture of origin;
- Doing simple nature reconnection exercises with the depressed, angry, or anxious;
- Teaching how to read patterns in nature as symbols to reflect on (“worldreading”);
- Updating a traditional tale (e.g., Jesus’s “take the beam out of your own eye”) to amplify its relevance (lesson: manage your projections);
- Teaching activists how to consult their dreams for practical wisdom and hints for where to go next in a campaign;
- Helping someone envision a new worldview or style of life built on inspiring stories and invigorating practices.
- There are many more examples of lamplighting here:
<https://www.chalquist.com/post/lamplighters-a-new-kind-of-change-agent>

Lamplighting operates at four levels. At the Personal, lamplighters work quietly and informally to offer reimagination, depth, soul, inspiration, and hope: in other words, Pronoian wisdom (see Ch. 3 below). [Enchantivism](#) work is Public. Deep restorying is for the professional level and

requires training. At the Profound level, Lamplighters foster ecospiritual transformation and revolution.

Lamplighting is not cheering up, “you got this,” or positive thinking. In the examples above, lamplighting uncovers and explores the hidden depths of a situation, crisis, or event, tending the play of ignored perceptions, emotions, themes, images, and symbols bubbling under the surface.

That is where the stuckness is, and also the salvation. We are saved, collectively and personally, by what we welcome back. The paradigm of *xenia* (“hospitality”) is basic to lamplighting: breaking free from outer and inner xenophobia to welcome the stranger (*xenos*) back from the margins of culture and consciousness, like the myth or folktale of old Baucis and Philemon opening their door to the two travelers seeking shelter for the night in an unfriendly village.

Some Necessary Terminology

“Lamplighting” toward expansive possibilities is something almost anyone can do. The word was inspired by my [Lamplighter Trilogy](#) of hopeful near-future speculative fiction. I have a lifelong interest in what practical dreamers can do in difficult times, as my career reflects.

In my novels, a Lamplighter is a member of a post-patriarchal, post-belief spiritual organization founded by three women and rooted in vision, celebration, inclusion, and an ethic of care. This Handbook describes lower-case “l” lamplighting as change-making visionary and guiding story work.

The following terms come from various projects and writings over the years, including my second PhD dissertation [Restorying Our Lore: Fiction, Vision, and Imagination as an Earth-Honoring Wisdom Path](#).

My dissertation refers to lamplighters as “loreosophers.” A *loreosopher* is a philosopher (in the grounded and embodied sense), depth psychologist, bard, visionary, possibility detective, and herald of hope rolled into one. Their hope is not a passive waiting for authorities to perform a rescue, but the noetic hope of finding new options bobbing in the shipwreck of our ruling stories and the institutions founded on them. Such depth restorying can bring wisdom, vision, inspiration, and workable truth and creativity.

Because our ruling stories are built on collective worldviews we cannot see but are stuck in, lamplighters (or Lamplighters or loreosophers or depth restoryers: take your pick) can be considered worldview therapists. Sometimes our worldviews need therapy more than we do. Loreosophers are loreweavers, but first they are often loreunweavers. They rely on the great philosophical and psychological traditions of imagination deployed as gnosis, as a way of knowing deeply. (See [Restorying Our Lore](#) for more about that.)

Abraham Maslow observed that human nature tends to be sold short. This is so especially in oppressive social, financial, and religious systems with a vested interest in demoralizing people into compliance. Lamplighting responds by highlighting human strengths, capacities, and potentialities. Bring these to full expression, and people will invent ways to solve problems,

initiate reforms, or build new frameworks to live by. They build nothing until they dare to imagine they can.

In fact, inspired people can do just about anything: topple empires, found new industries, uplift the fallen, explore the unknown, chart consciousness itself. Lamplighters (and [enchantivists](#)) show them how to dream together, creating mental shifts that result in different kinds of relationships. Instead of focusing on winning or losing, shouting or preaching, shaming or blaming, we weave together ever thicker and broader webs of lively interdependency. “Not authority,” writes Joseph Campbell, “but aspiration is the motivator, builder, and transformer of civilization (*Creative Mythology*).”

We need a few more terms. One is *loreway*, a consciously woven pathway of humane, motivating, and fulfilling keystone stories (guiding fictions) by which we individuate while stepping further into our relationality, humanity, and maturity. Such a pathway can serve as a wisdom way, a philosophy centered on what most appeals and gives us joy and meaning, and even as a religious alternative. A loreway is the crafted and evolving saga—not necessarily heroic!—of our hopes and goals, dreams and strivings, values and best practices, all storied around the lore—fiction—we find most compelling. It is a style of life lined by guiding fictions.

Loreway-making is imaginative and creative: two key capacities for coping with post-normal times. In the West, creative action has been gradually maturing beyond the individualistic, atomistic, lone-genius model of Modernity towards a more collaborative and complex approach. A loreway is a mythopoetic project we can build together.

Loreology refers to doing lamplighting as a discipline, vocation, or career. See my blog [“What Is a Loreologist?”](#) for examples.

Although lamplighters are world-conjurers of a sort, we can lamplight as befits our style of being. Not all of us are able to be highly extraverted, risk-taking, and even heroic activists, leaders, fighters, or reformers. We can make change with a lively imagination, a deep care for life on Earth, and a willingness to plant stories in the fertile space between real and ideal, what is and what if. Our tools include inspirations, visions, dreams, tracked motifs, elaborated images, retold myths and folktales, and storytellings that open shared imaginal landscapes. In storytelling, the activist and corporatist, rebel and cop, artist and financier come together in a commons of image and language as fellow humans dwelling in more-than-human terrain.

The most motivating story of all is a vision, dream, or cause that calls out to be responded to. All else is important but secondary. My own dream is of Terrania, the name I give to a peaceful, Earth-appreciating civilization of abundance, justice, and inclusion: a civilization governed by the emotionally mature. We can assemble it if enough of us dream together and then take steps.

Examples of Lamplighting Values



Although the values held by lamplighters are implicit throughout this handbook, some bear stating:

- Community, conviviality, and open discussion
- Imaginal freedom, and the ability to dream and to support others' dreams
- Appreciation of difference and diversity
- Practicality, a virtue known to the ancient world as Prudence
- Compassion for those who suffer, whether human or not
- Personal responsibility and commitment
- Truth, honesty, and integrity
- Faith in human nature
- Love for the world
- Open-mindedness and mental flexibility
- Constant self-reflection
- Nonviolence and peace
- Hope for better futures.

Stand by these values. It keeps your soul alive. Finding the courage to care for what you love and hope for, by little steps or big ones, is how the world improves—and how you evolve along with it.

2. The Lamplighting Theory of Change

There is nothing as practical as a good theory.
—attributed to action researcher Kurt Lewin

If only facts were enough.

Facts, data, evidence, numbers, studies, graphs, and charts are important, but they don't change minds. Expecting them to expect more than they can deliver. With few exceptions, they speak only to people whose worldviews are already receptive, or about to be. Information unaligned with one's guiding stories is automatically rejected by ever-watchful psychological defenses.

To bring about any kind of effective change from disempowerment, injustice, greed, or just plain business as usual toward a fuller life for all of us, we must address those stories. And to do that, we must build relationships. Informally.

How much gets done in official meetings? In committees and task forces? They are useful for business as usual, but seldom for making change. Frederick Douglass kept President Lincoln focused on eliminating slavery by meeting with him privately. Speaking of presidents, John Muir taking Theodore Roosevelt on a camping trip to Yosemite saved the valley. Poet and activist Jacqueline Suskin persuaded industrialist vice president Neal Ewald not to log down 1,000 acres of redwood trees by writing him a poem for his dead wife.

Before and beyond our ideological stances, we are members of the human family sharing Earth with many other living beings. Informally cultivated relationships can remind us of that before we start the often-difficult work of restorying our worldviews.

Why Worldviews Matter

A worldview is a conceptual template of basic beliefs and values, sense of self, picture of the world, core assumptions about human nature, and other foundational mental structures that orient us in life. Put simply, it is a cultural philosophy or imaginary at the collective level and a personal philosophy for individuals. We each have one, with our individual versions are nested inside the collective ones.

Take for an example a corporate leader who micromanages people. He makes them feel guilty about taking time off, blames them when coworkers quit, and fires them at will. People cannot be trusted to work responsibly and so must be watched. Women at work are particularly suspect; they gossip, manipulate, and neglect their families. Ultimately, underlings are chess pieces to be arranged so he looks good to his superiors. In fact, it's only the numbers that say what is really going on at work; relationships don't matter as much.

The overarching worldview in which this man lives is patriarchy, the cultural paradigm that men are more valuable than women and should be accorded greater privileges. It is an old paradigm, developed when the first armies were raised to guard the first monocrop settlements. Within patriarchy operates what my work refers to as the Big Machine worldview, otherwise known as Modernity, which divides everything into parts. Its chief values include control, production,

force, efficiency, quantification, autonomy, and detachment. This man's largely unconscious individual worldview is a personalized edition of these encompassing ways of perceiving life and world. (I have worked for men like this. Many of us have.)

He won't change his personal worldview easily because it gives him privileges, power over others, a self-image, the illusion of prediction, a set of goals, and a fixed place to stand. His worldview might change if one or more of these occur:

- A disorienting catastrophe that his worldview can't help him manage;
- A destabilizing shift in the collective worldviews that support his;
- Social exile inflicted by leading representatives of those worldviews;
- A rising sense of constriction, longing, and unhappiness;
- Pushback from enough people he loves and respects;
- A close encounter with a more satisfying worldview.

Lamplighting addresses all of these, but the last one in particular. But not through missionizing.

Consider another man brought up in the patriarchy worldview, but this time less in the Big Machine and more in the older Heavenly Kingdom of traditional religion. (The Big Machine started up with the Industrial and Scientific Revolutions, the Heavenly Kingdom back in the Bronze Age.) This man allows himself to be conscious that a medieval cosmology and archaic rituals and creeds don't work for him. When he meets people who respect ancient wisdom but embrace more contemporary modes of reflection and spirituality, he tries what they do and finds it satisfying. His worldview shifts.

In other words, he finds a more moving and expansive story to live in. He feels more alive and engaged, feels a sense of belonging here on Earth, and perceives people outside his original religion as kindred. No one argued with him, bombed him with facts, or produced clever arguments to change his mind. (I know him pretty well.)

Change begins with the opportunity to find the treasure in the dark, the creative in the calamity. Sometimes delight is a more powerful motivator than fear. The Beloved Community, the "world community of my desire," Eupsychia, Terrania: instead of pushing us, they pull. When our guiding story (keystone fiction, worldview) changes, everything that depends on it changes too.

Transrevolution: Deep, Lasting Transmutation

Transrevolution is when a living system restructures itself from the inside out, reorganizing around a new central image or vision of its basic nature and purpose. In technical terms, transrevolution is cultural autopoiesis: collective regeneration consciously fostered. As such it is a natural transition in the life cycle of a complex social system.

Systems theorists distinguish between two levels of change: *first-order*, in which superficial aspects of a complex system—a society, a network, a forest—are altered while leaving the system's basic style and operation intact; and *second-order*, where new interactions between the system's hubs, nodes, and other key components create a new system that works in novel ways.

Likewise, psychotherapists can see the difference between insights reabsorbed into a client's lifestyle-as-usual and far-reaching changes in personality, attitude, and behavior.

Something similar is true for social systems. Ordinary revolutions do not re-pattern the system; instead, they merely replace one set of leaders with another, transferring power while old habits persist and the unheard remain neglected and disadvantaged. Revolutions also depend on violence. *Transrevolutions* involve basic redesign with long-range consequences. They are peaceful mobilizations of energy and action across social strata.

Transrevolutions begin when an outworn social system starts to fall apart. As voices pushed aside by this system call out from the cracks opening in its public surfaces, a new guiding image (symbol, vision, dream, archetype, myth, strange attractor) stimulates the imagination of sensitive people. When they recognize each other as similarly called, they begin to organize. The networks they weave eventually blueprint new institutions and centers of public discourse.

Transrevolutions unfold at various scales, from the personal to the familial to the collective and, one day, perhaps, the planetary. Examples of transrevolutions whose effects continue include:

- Gnosticism, which shifted biblical tales from salvation to liberation
- The House of Wisdom and Translation Movement (Baghdad, 8th century CE).
- Finnish independence, suffrage, and liberatory art (1917)
- The Harlem Renaissance (1920s-30s)
- The Civil Rights, Women's Rights, and Gay Rights Movements
- The Green Belt Movement (1977) from Kenya outward
- Organismic / depth psychology (e.g., depth, humanistic, transpersonal)
- Ecopsychology, ecotherapy, ecospirituality (e.g., the Wild Church Network)
- The ecological / participatory / trans-species / Gaian worldview.

Because transrevolutions represent evolutions (rather than revolutions) that challenge existing positions of power, they are always resisted by elements seeking to maintain the system at its current level of (dys)functionality. As a result, transrevolutions often take time to play out, although their nonlinear ramifications can leap forward unpredictably, like pioneer species (weeds) suddenly turning up across disturbed ground to help convert it into a mature ecosystem. *The more integrated and interconnected the evolutionary efforts involved, the faster they tend to conduct their work of redesign.*

In transrevolutionary action, narrow habits of thought expand, creative urges find expression, supportive conversations deepen among diverse views, visions find common ground on which to grow, traditionally rigid roles loosen, and participants move toward their full humanity and maturity.

Communities of Our Desire

What kinds of community would be delightful and welcoming for us to belong to? Responses I have heard in classes, workshops, and public discussions include:

- Friendly; cohesive; welcoming

- Inclusive and safe for everyone
- Prosperous for everyone
- Genuinely democratic
- Mentored by elders
- Supportive of families
- Ecologically wise
- Protective of the vulnerable
- Friendly to imagination
- Fun to belong to.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke of the “Beloved Community”: society founded on justice, love and compassion for one another, and truly equal opportunity. As Coretta Scott King explained:

Dr. King’s Beloved Community is a global vision in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood.

We can apply these goals locally: in our homes, in study circles, in our neighborhoods. When linked through lamplighter or enchantivist projects, these experiments in belonging and decency can turn into a transrevolution.

3. Pronoian Wisdom

We tend to separate wisdom from life, which is odd. This results in separating wisdom from making change. In the shadow of the Big Machine worldview, what counts is measurable action. But without reflection, our actions go awry and repeat old stories and old trauma. Then activism becomes acting out.

What is Wisdom?

Wisdom is easier to recognize than to define. We can all think of people we consider wise, but what makes them so? They seem to have an extra dimension to them, a depth of knowledge beyond the technical or academic. We might define wisdom as *insightful, holistic, and deep knowing: true understanding* in contrast to *avidya*, or ignorance, which is different from simply not having been taught something. Avidya rather is more like clinging to biases we won't let go of, or persisting in illusions, or refusing to be mentally flexible enough to change our minds.

Robert McDermott's definition links wisdom to ethics: "Wisdom is deep or uncommon knowledge essential for living and a foundation for right action" (*Philo-Sophia*). It requires no wisdom to build an atomic bomb or let loose AI on an unsuspecting public. Wisdom asks, "Why do this? For whose benefit? What might be the consequences?"

The world's folklore contains many wisdom figures, usually depicted as goddesses and wise feminine beings. A mythic definition of wisdom would be: having a conscious relationship with Sophia. "You don't believe in Wisdom," says Rabbi Rami Shapiro, "you engage with her." She has many archetypal sisters: Ma'at, Hellenistic Isis, Pronoia, Athena, White Buffalo Calf Woman, Star Woman, Saraswati, Amaterasu, Fatima, Nuwa, Nzambi...

Pronoian wisdom is when we bring wisdom to public concerns in service to enlightenment, community, justice, healing, and humaneness. The ultimate goal is to become fuller and more mature human beings in our dealings with ourselves, each other, and our troubled homeworld. This wisdom is visionary, grounded, metanoic, and creative.

Mythologically, Pronoian wisdom invokes the goddess Pronoia, the wife of foresightful Prometheus. She saw what was coming. Later, she appears as a Gnostic goddess similar to wise Sophia. In this form, Pronoia repeatedly descends into human life to nourish those who seek her counsel. What she brings comes before intellectualizing or abstraction: her name means "before mind." "Pronoia" psychologically is the opposite of paranoia and carries a flavor of belonging and homecoming. (We might say "pronoiac" wisdom, but "pronoian" better suggests membership in a community.)

Why do we need wisdom in the streets outside the hallowed halls? So entire misled populations don't elect dictators. So people can be empowered to demand limitations on industries that harm the planet and its creatures, including us. So we can get at the underlying factors and motivations for our worst choices and make changes instead of relying on easy explanations that go nowhere. ("Fathom" originally meant "embrace," then "depth": getting to the bottom of things.)

So we can educate wise leaders instead of malignant narcissists who care only about themselves. Unwise leadership is killing us.

So politics, religion, finance, industry, medicine, agriculture, education, technology, and other contemporary institutions and forms of organized power can serve us and the world instead of reducing us to the distracted parts of a machinery of disheartening soullessness.

So we can raise boys to respect women, women to reject abuse, and everyone to respect the fluidity and diversity of gender and sex and ways to love.

So we can be free of the forces that oppress us from the inside out and vice versa.

Quiet Outreach

In his letters, fantasy novelist J. R. R. Tolkien coined the word “Sarumanism” to designate the belief that only fame, money, or power make real change in the world. He disagreed. Even hobbits without armies can alter the course of history.

We can too, at least a little, but only if we loop each other into an ongoing conversation about reenchantment. To make our influence count, to receive support and clarity, we must join at least occasionally with the like-minded. Some ideas:

- Engage in continual self-inventory and self-care; schedule both. Watch especially for overidentification with a cause. Know at least as much about what you are for as what you are against.
- Collect mentors and wise elders who can help you see your blind spots.
- Create business cards and brochures to distribute at whatever gatherings you attend.
- Informally share your lamplighting activities within your social circle. Social media can be useful even for introverts who dislike self-promotion. It’s the work you promote, not yourself.
- When you finish presenting or storytelling, tell your audience you’re available to teach people who are interested in becoming lamplighters. Share materials. The more agents of reenchantment around, the better.
- Gather a diverse network of supporters who like your work. Create inspiring online and offline spaces to meet in. Be imaginative. Meet outside on occasion as well so the natural world can participate in the conversation. Tell dreams together.
- Create a heartstead: a small, local group designed for dreaming up stories and practices of reenchantment and its implementation. It can also be used for mutual support, problem-solving, resource-gathering, reflective listening and dialog, practical research, preserving crafts and skills, and educating self and group.
- Play with the idea that your group is a new form of culture. What stories inform it? What sort of society do you wish it to be? What are its guiding norms, values, favorite activities, costumes, holidays? *How can we put our stories of a better future into practice*

today? And what would happen if we combined stories—new myths, for instance—into one bigger story of how to participate in the ailing world’s renewal?

- Pose the Three Steps to your audience at the end: *What are three specific and immediate steps you can take toward realizing your vision of what you most desire?*
- Join the Enchantivism group at Facebook and let us know what you’re up to: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/enchantivism/>.

In the end, whatever scale we choose to act on, the future belongs to those who can envision its possibilities for attaining our full humanness, working to restore the world as one species among many dwelling upon our blue homeworld floating in the cosmic reaches.

Sustaining Personal Practices

One of the chief causes of activist burnout is neglect of self-care, a condition afflicting non-activists as well. Neglect of self-reflection can also cause problems. It can be risky for your health and relationships if, instead of your having a cause, the cause has you. This amounts to a state of psychological possession.

Also, those of us who wish to bring more light into the world are especially prone to overworking ourselves. An additional risk here is that preoccupation with getting tangible things done renders deeper sources of wisdom unavailable to us. If you aren’t sleeping enough, for example, you not only endanger your health and focus, you lose contact with dreams that could fill in vital missing pieces. Our conscious self knows only so much.

When possible, make time for some or all of the following daily or as often as possible:

1. Rest and recovery, even if only for a few moments.
2. Morning time spent with dreams to assess their messages.
3. Some form of inwardness: meditation, reflection, imagination, prayer, etc.
4. Nature contact. We evolved in the natural world and need to stay in touch with it.
5. Conversation with at least one friend, family member, or supportive person.
6. Exercise, especially outdoors.
7. Play and daydream.

Ecotherapist Linda Buzzell suggests the following daily practices:

1. Love. Caring, kindness, fellowship, compassion for all beings.
2. Joy. Life, change, beauty, the ineffable Mystery.
3. Peace. Balance, order, mind, serenity.
4. Gratitude.
5. Service to the rest of Life.

There are too many consciousness-amplifying and -enriching practices available around the world to list here. Let’s single out dreams because they also open windows onto what we don’t know about external events—such as the collapse of an organization I was part of when I dreamed some weeks before the event of a high-rise catching fire. Dreams pick up impressions we miss during the day and weave them into symbols we encounter at night.

To fathom the language of dreams requires practice as well as mental flexibility, especially for those who tend to think literally. Dream symbols are almost never literal. The high-rise in my

nightmare was a precise symbolic diagnosis of what was wrong with the organization: it had reached too high and far beyond its current capacities. It lacked broad foundations. Its structures were like darkened glass invisible from outside. A useful question to ask about symbols in a dream is: Of what is this a metaphor?

Dream groups are an excellent introduction to the practical value of dreamwork. See the Resources section at the end of this Handbook.

When working with dreams, be aware of the following:

- Dream books of symbols won't help unless an explanation clicks with you. If you dream of being in a car (for example), what associations come to mind for you? Are you in the driver's seat, or a passenger? Is the car moving slowly? Too rapidly? A car in your dream might or might not match what a car "means" in someone else's opinion.
- "World dreams" often point to oncoming collective events. Several months before the 2024 national election in the U.S., a dream turned the Empire State Building into Gol Dolgur, the sorcerous stronghold mentioned in *The Lord of the Rings*.
- If you don't remember your dreams, try setting an intention every night before you turn in that you will try to remember some. Eventually, you probably will.
- You can mentally ask yourself before sleep to dream about a situation or event you would like clarification about.
- Be wary of interpretations that disconnect the dream from the dayworld.
- Don't share other people's dreams without permission.

In fostering deep and lasting change, your consciousness is a key component. The more you nourish and explore it, the more effective will be what you bring.

4. Making Soulful Change



One day when I was wondering what a just, nature-honoring, and difference-appreciating world society would be like to live in, the fanciful word *Terrania* drifted through my heart. I offer it as a fanciful mythic image of Earth lovingly and peacefully inhabited.

Why “reenchanting”? So much of our language for cultural change has gotten lost in the gloom of what’s wrong. The very word “dreamer” invokes another, “impractical,” in cynics who cannot see past their grim lists of what’s broken. Self-appointed judges of other people’s behavior stand ready to denounce everyone but themselves as “colonizers,” “complicit,” or worse.

(See [“Apocalypticism: The Lure of the Abyss.”](#))

In such a darkened atmosphere, to be enchanted is more courageous than to be disheartened. The soft root breaks the rock; water wears it down; wind erodes it. Few are inspired by inundations of blame and bad news, but the formerly indifferent will often enlist to actualize soulful visions of how enchanting (just, fair, abundant, wondrous, delightful) things *could* be.

Guiding Questions for Lighting Lamps

When you or others are be stuck in an unsatisfactory situation calling out for change, three exploratory questions can guide whatever actions you decide to take:

1. What is missing?
2. How can what wants in be given expression?
3. What best collaborative outcome do you imagine?

These can be asked in any order and often overlap.

1. What is missing?

Hope? Planning? Vision? Truth? What’s missing is already present, knocking on the door through symptoms, stresses, and even dreams, yearning to be let in. Some years back, I was asked to chair a program in higher ed. I was one of five core faculty, all white, all hetero, all Western. What was missing was rather obvious.

In the groups I once led for men convicted of violence, anger management skills were missing, but that was surface. Underneath, these men had never grown up emotionally. Not a single one had ever enjoyed a good relationship with his father.

Other examples of what might be missing at a deeper level:

- In a fragmented neighborhood: a cause residents can get inspired by.
- In despairing climate scientists: contact through experiential exercises with the deep healing power of the natural world.
- In a group of immigrants feeling culturally lost: reconnection with the wisdoms within their own folklore.
- In burned-out activists: work on what persistent nightmares might be trying to say in symbolic language.
- In a political party stuck in an uninspiring “we’re saving you money” meme: vibrant and specific visions of how things could be different.
- In a work unit habitually mistreated by higher-ups: guts, silenced anger, and a plan for pushing back creatively.

Nothing important, nothing we need, ever goes entirely away. It returns in changed form, awaiting recognition.

2. *How can what wants in be given expression?*

When I took the department chair job, I studied the program’s history for recurring themes. One of them was the image of a bridge. The department was founded to put Western psychology of the deep sort in conversation with South Eastern wisdom traditions. Over the decades, traditions and practices from other parts of the world had entered the curriculum. The bridge had become a hub. I emphasized that natural evolution to underline the need for more diverse faculty to bring the department more fully into its true being. To build out our hub, we promoted a queer woman to core faculty, hired an Indian scholar to eventually replace me as chair, hired a scholar from China, another from Mexico, and a female Jewish scholar. Three of these replaced retiring core faculty. The imaginal hub had become an actual one.

In men’s groups we used respectful confrontation, boundary-setting, accountability, emotional education, homework (e.g., Michael Meade’s *Men and the Water of Life*), and an array of other growing-up tools to foster maturation in the men beyond the anger-management skills we taught them. By the numbers we kept, more than 90% of the men who went through our entire program never reviolated their probation. A guiding image for them was the warm, mature, wise father.

3. *What is the best collaborative outcome you can imagine?*

In the first example, a department of greater diversity: a true hub of culture and learning. In the men’s groups, participants leaving the group more mature, emotionally self-regulating, peaceful, and responsible than when they entered. In both cases, a group of us held imaginings of these possibilities long enough for them to become actualities to work toward.

Imagination has so often been used as a form of deep knowing down through history that my dissertation refers to that variety of it as *imagiknowing*. It accesses deep internal resources, brings intuition into play, opens the wisdom of the unconscious, and gains scope when blended with others’ imaginings. To access those quiet voices, we must suspend purely practical considerations for long enough to let these deeper resources speak to us.

In all situations where lamplighting can help, a smaller constricting guiding story creates a powerful but often unconscious yearning to expand the story into a creative saga (loreway) offering new possibilities for living.

The TERRANIA Model

The TERRANIA model is a more detailed template for aligning consciousness, deliberation, gathering, and assessment for turning disenchanting situations into reenchanting opportunities. I also use it when I teach enchantivism:

Touch: The prompt that brings us into our deep work. The problem, edge, or issue that touches the heart. Going deeper into such an internally felt summoning event gradually reveals its connection to an external issue that requests our attention.

Engagement: Deciding to take on the issue and explore it instead of turning away or numbing out. The phase of commitment. Saying Yes to the summons. We take the hint, connect inner and outer, and decide to act.

Reflection: Mustering contemplative and imaginal resources as we sit with the Touch, grow a plan for responding to it, and imagine and reimagine how to cross the gap between real and ideal, issue and resolution, here and there.

Relationship: Joining with others for deep discussion and support as we plan. Consulting with our inside circle. Announcing our project. Finding allies. Forming a *heartstead* around the issue (see the section on heartsteading below).

Action: Carrying out the heartstead plan. Moving outward from reflection to implementation. Setting forth the transmutative story, project, or enactment. Offering reflections on its relevance and encouraging others to do likewise.

Networking: Spreading the news of the action. Telling people about it. Outreach. Expression and articulation of what we're up to.

Inquiry: Inwardly and outwardly assessing the results of our action. What worked? What didn't? What was surprising, and why? What dreams and feelings arose in response to it?

Advancing: Planning and carrying out next steps, repeating what's above as needed. Following up. Continuing the work before it gets cold. Moving forward. Sustaining the commitment. Serving what has summoned us. (Not all projects include this step.)

EARTH, Five Attitudes to facilitate lamplighting throughout the work:

Enthusiasm (motivational): Keeping your energy and interest high.

Aspiration (imaginal): Dreaming of how things could be and trusting those dreams.

Responsibility (ethical): Standing for your principles and aspirations.

Tenacity (intentional): Keeping at what matters in spite of obstacles.

Hopefulness (foresightful): Holding open the possibility for fair, resilient, diverse, Earth-loving forms of lasting beloved community.

Self-Inventory

Lack of self-inquiry is highly problematic. Most of the world's doers behave as though they had no unconscious motives. Is it any wonder so much harm can be done without intending it? We begin our self-inventory with:

1. **Conduct a rigorous self-check.** Have you imagined the vision you work for so well that it lives in you? Is your unconscious aligned with your conscious intent? Do you have a sense of self apart from the struggle? Do you see through the belief that only money and power make systems change? Do you have your cause, or does it have you ("a total obsession with partial ideas" - L. Whyte)? Are you more committed to making allies than to punishing the oblivious by drenching them with unending bad news (unconscious retaliation)? Do you shame others for falling short of your ideals? Do you have enough emotional and material support from friends and allies? Do you know at least as much about what you fight *for* as what you fight *against*?
2. **Put together a network of supporters** who can advise and care for you. Never try socially transmutative work alone. Spend time with friends and caring family. Play with children. Some of your supporters need to be forthright enough to help with your ongoing self-check.
3. **Seek out mentors and wise elders.** We all need their advice and blessings at times. Working with them also helps them stay engaged after they retire from active work.
4. **Make a list of self-care practices and a schedule for using them.** Time set aside for meditation, music, art, bodywork, and unstructured recreation can keep you sane and moving forward. Get outdoors and walk around, appreciating the beauty around you. Watch your dreams for indications that it's time for you to stop and maintain well-being.
5. **Limit how much news and social media you absorb.** Learn how much is too much, and take time to detoxify.
6. **Create safe spaces** for being alongside people injured by the system or scared by its harm so they can be with their feelings and come back to life. The idea is not to evangelize or lead, but to support and accompany (see "Accompaniment" below).
7. **Give emotional and financial support to change-inspirers.** They need it, especially in turbulent times.
8. **Share your best practices** with allies (including former opponents) and work together on change-enhancing projects.
9. **Stay at the margins,** holding space for new ways of relating instead of being absorbed and overpowered by a dying system. Use it as a source of talent and energy instead of loaning any to it.

The following section discusses the power and efficacy of storytelling broadly conceived.

5. The Power of Storytelling

We could be sitting in Belfast, and I could remember it clearly in the middle of the city center on an evening of storytelling. Catholic, Protestant, no religion, all together sharing stories, and you could be hearing a bomb going off or shooting outside, but somehow or other stories brought us together...Storytelling is very powerful, and if we work with stories, it promotes a greater understanding.

— Liz Weir

Why Storytelling?

In the 1860s, the text that galvanized the Union campaign during the American Civil War was not a speech, a grand strategy, or a set of orders, but a novel: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).

In 1917, Finland declared its independence, defying the influence of the powerful Swedish and Russian empires. Their inspiration? A book of folktales called the *Kalevala*.

In the 1960s, people fighting against deforestation quoted from—Proudhon? Marx? no: JRR Tolkien. They were trying to stop the world from being turned into dark Mordor.

In 2015, Thai reformists rallied by using the three-finger salute they had seen in the *Hunger Games* films.

People don't want more information. They are up to their eyeballs in information. They want faith—faith in you, your goals, your success, in the story you tell. It is faith that moves mountains, not facts... Faith can overcome any obstacle, achieve any goal. Money, power, authority, political advantage, and brute force have all, at one time or another, been overcome by faith. Story is your path to creating faith.

— Annette Simmons

We all come in imagining. At age one, a baby can pretend to put a doll to bed. What does it mean that we spend about half our waking life in fantasy mode via daydreaming and a third of our entire life asleep dreaming stories? It means that human beings are two-legged procreators and transporters of stories.

During a normal presentation, mainly the language areas of the brain are active. But stories talk directly to the amygdala, limbic system, right hemisphere, sensory cortex, and other neural structures that process information about emotionally and sensorially felt reality. The brain diverts extra and early processing time to what evokes strong emotions and sensations.

Our best facts mean nothing at all without storied frameworks that give them meaning and context. Changing the story changes what facts mean. Actions result not from facts, but from what we tell ourselves the facts mean. New facts offered without new stories are usually discounted.

Stories allow people to explore meanings and draw conclusions without being preached at. Our

examples lead to their conclusions. Nobody is made wrong, yet actions and attitudes change. Anecdotal stories can reveal and disarm the hearer's silent objections by showing how the teller worked through them. Such stories offer more guidance than fixed rules that cannot handle conflict or paradox.

Persuasion and argument push, and we resist being pushed. Stories pull you in. They spread long after the effort required to cajole and manipulate has dissipated. A hearer beaten down with logic is less reliable ultimately than one who finds inspiration in your story and moves forward from within their own genuine connection to the cause.

Stories about what's relevant to listeners inspire trust, especially honest personal stories that can make the connection that's needed before anything else can happen. Stories let you demonstrate, not just talk about, your trustworthiness and deep involvement.

It's hard to empathize with an argument. But stories can reach across cultural and political divides, opening common ground where the conservative and the radical, the materialist and the spiritualist, the cynic and the dreamer can meet.

Here are some tips for effective storytelling that invites imagining how good (just, abundant, delightful, ethical, transparent, Earth-honoring) things could be, and even already are here and there around the world:

- Start compiling your own storybook: a collection of tales you use. Begin with one myth you like, one folk or fairy tale, one interesting current event told as a story, one historical event tellable as a story, one family story, and one personal anecdote. Each story should show how rupture or crisis can lead to renewal. Each should energize you in the telling.
- Practice them until they feel like broken-in new shoes. (The story breaks you in, too.) Mind the rhythm and pacing. Use pauses effectively.
- If the issues are too intense for productive discussion, try telling stories safely distant from but applicable to what's going on. However, using stories, folklore, art, etc. to push agendas risks turning them into weapons of flat, ideological allegory sure to be resisted. Indirect storytelling goes around the hearer's defenses, defuses resistance, and allows recipients to interpret instead of feeling blamed or preached at.
- Learn what you can in advance about the audience, group, or venue.
- Warm up your voice; get in the habit of speaking from the belly, not just the throat.
- "When I see the news about" (name a specific social malady or injustice), "I'm reminded of the following story..." and let *them* make the connection.
- Don't recite a tale, reimagine it and tell it from within it.
- For slideshows, rely on images with very little text on each slide. Use a large font.
- Let characters in the story represent and work through important dilemmas or conflicts. Let them speak and gesture for themselves.
- Be moderately expressive, neither overly dramatic nor monotonous.
- Practice until you can avoid distracting mannerisms like repeating "ummm" or "you know," fidgeting with your hair, etc.
- If you share what the story means to you, be brief.
- Leave the audience with a lasting image or idea.

- If your storytelling was part of a formal event, always write to thank the hosts.
- Arrange for a sign-in sheet for people who might want to converse with you afterwards. Include some small brochures about what in all this you like to discuss most.
- Convene discussion circles to help people apply the stories to life.
- Use the contact info you collected at the event to invite people to your storytelling circle.
- Assess the event: What worked? What didn't and needs improvement? What did you learn? What's next?

Example of New Tricks from Old Myth

We live in times of peril. What hints can folklore offer in for meeting such a time?

We tend to think that resistance to injustice must always be heroic. Certainly, heroic activism has protected what rights we still enjoy and has prevented swathes of Earth from unhealable damage. But what are the trans-heroic possibilities for fomenting change? What do the old stories say to those of us desiring to help but not called to direct intervention?

Oonagh's Insurgency

One day the heroic Finn MacCumhaill, chief of the Fianna, came home worried to death. He had been boasting about overcoming Benandonner, a legendary giant who had challenged Finn to a fight.

Finn disregarded the gossip about his opponent's prowess ("He flattened a thunderbolt and put it in his pocket!" "His jumping causes earthquakes!" etc.) until he saw what seemed to be a large hill on the other side of the causeway. The hill was Benandonner, waiting for him.

Fighting giants was one thing, but fighting a hill-sized giant quite another, even for the head of the finest warriors of Ireland.

When he came home, his wife Oonagh perceived his distress and asked him about it. Ashamed, he finally told her his troubles.

"He is coming," Finn stated. "He will be here by tomorrow. If I run away I'll disgrace myself. If I fight him...."

"Leave him to me."

Oonagh opened the door after Benandonner's spear butt nearly beat it in. "I'm looking for Finn MacCumhaill," rumbled the giant.

"He's away hunting, but would you like to come in and wait for him?"

"Yes."

First, though, she asked, would he mind picking up the entire house and turning it out of the

wind? Finn always did that when it got cold.

After an uncomfortable pause the giant put his arms around the house (barely) and, with a great heave, managed to turn it out of the wind. He stood up panting.

"I appreciate it. Now would you mind doing me another favor? You might have seen that pebble lyin' at the bottom of the hill over there. We've had dry weather and little water, but Finn says the rock covers a fine spring. He was going to break open a space for the spring but he's not here. Would you be able to do it?"

She took him down the hill and showed him. To his dismay he beheld a huge slab of solid stone. With a mighty effort he opened a gash (now called Lumford's Glen) but cracked his right middle finger doing it.

"Thank you ever so much. Won't you come in now?"

The sweating giant entered the hall and looked around.

"Go ahead and put down your spear over there next to Finn's." She pointed to a tall fir tree topped by a boulder.

"What is this?" asked Benandonner, pointing at a block of oak as large as four chariot wheels.

"Finn's shield. —Have a seat at the table here and I'll bring you some of the griddle cakes I make for him."

The giant rested from his labors while the sizzle of cooking bread and fat wafted from the kitchen. Soon Oonagh appeared with a plate of cakes and set it on the table.

Benandonner eagerly bit into one and howled in pain.

"I'm so sorry," she replied courteously. "Finn likes his bread rather chewy." The cake concealed an iron griddle cooked inside it. He found the bacon no easier, perhaps because it was nailed to a block of timber.

"I see my baby is awake. I had better feed him."

She gave the "baby" a cake with no griddle baked into it. To the giant's surprise, the large mouth beneath the charming blue bonnet ate the entire cake at one go. A thumb replaced the cake.

Suddenly Benandonner seemed eager to leave. Oonagh showed him out. The sooner I'm back home the better, the giant thought. He thanked her for her hospitality.

As a salve to his pride, Finn stripped off bonnet and sheet, dashed outside, and threw a

handful of earth at Benandonner's retreating back. It missed, but when it landed it created the Isle of Man. The hole left by Finn's scooping hand became Lough Neagh.

Many lessons could be drawn from this Irish tale. To focus on one: the story presents possibilities for what we might call *contrariness* as both alternative and supplement to activism (including pacifism). The strongest, bravest hero does not always win. But the cleverly passive-aggressive often do.

Throughout history, governments have fallen and armies been beaten by accumulating acts of quiet contrariness: peasant farmers keeping more of their own crops than their oppressors counted on; soldiers abandoning their posts and going home to be with their families; citizens refusing to spend money at financially crucial times; false rumors of oncoming massive revolts.... Although history books are full of Carlyle's famous men, in truth the course of events has often been changed (as when the presence of wolves changes a river's course) by foot-dragging, dissimulation, desertion, pilfering, false compliance, feigned ignorance, slander, humor, seduction, delayed payments, spreading rumors, and plain screwing off.

For the most part, contrariness resistance has played out unorganized. But what if it were planned with the cunning of Oonagh? How long could the morale endure of a bullying potentate if his driver, his tailor, some of his bodyguards, his hair stylist, various pedestrians, reporters on TV, and servers and cooks in restaurants treated him with avuncular, low-key disapproval? How long would a crooked bank stand if even half its customers withdrew \$30 all at once and announced it online? Instead of taking the risk of going on strike, what if the employees of a corrupt company all showed up one day an hour late? What if they all decided to do less work while pretending to do more?

These moves by themselves won't bring down a political or financial giant; but they aren't intended to. They work more like mosquito bites, swarming character attacks, or paper cuts. They get attention, they open opportunities for even larger moves, they rally the non-heroic, and they remind us that ordinary people, not leaders or institutions, hold the real power. But to work, and this is key, they must be prompted by clear visions of how much better things *could* be.

6. Accompaniment, Making Allies, and Heartsteading

Accompaniment: Trans-Heroic Being-With

In “Accompaniment: Psychosocial, Trans-Species, and Environmental,” depth psychologist Mary Watkins discusses the Liberation Theology practice of being with the oppressed and the victimized as an alternative to rescuing them or diagnosing them psychiatrically. “To move toward accompaniment,” she writes, “requires both psychic and social decolonization, and a shedding of professionalized roles that proceed from a sense of expertism and excess power and are too often oriented toward professional aggrandizement.”

Accompaniment (*acompañamiento*) is a conscientious walking in the company of others, being alongside those who suffer. We take the journey with them, not as temporary helper or savior, but as *compañeros* in long-term and perhaps indefinite struggle. Such companionship is invited, never imposed, freely dialogical, and supportive of the accompanied’s strivings for liberatory knowledge, voice, and action, especially when these have been suppressed by culturally sanctioned inequalities.

While keeping company on the journey, the accompanier—depending on the needs and desires of those accompanied—may provide individual and community witness and support, solidarity in relevant social movements, assistance with networking with communities at a distance suffering similar conditions, and help in educating civil society about the difficulties suffered and the changes needed to relieve this suffering.

Accompaniment demands constant self-reflection, in part because, “When the one who accompanies is not from the group being accompanied, he or she often enjoys privileges and freedoms that those accompanied do not have access to.” This can easily turn into a power play. “It is not a practice that is universalizable in a single format, but rather demands to be ethically and empathically crafted and situated in specific places according to the needs and desires of particular others.” It can be used as a form of lamplighting.

We can learn from the extensive experience of musicians in accompanying singers, dancers, and other musicians. The one who accompanies musically must listen acutely to the unfolding song or melody or carefully watch the movements of the dancers. Usually the accompanist recedes from the limelight, taking a supportive role. He often plays in a lower pitch, and may not play in the final performance. He provides the background for more important parts, supplying harmony and rhythm to the melody. He is successful to the degree that he is in alignment with the unfolding melody.

In accompanying from a lamplighter stance, we encourage the accompanied to find their own storied strengths for serving them on whatever journey they are on. Relinquishing the “heroic” privilege of attacking those we see as villains (who may react by further punishing their victims), we focus instead on walking in compassion and witness with those who suffer. While others risk loudly speaking truth to power, we assuage powerlessness with possibility.

From Enemies to Allies

Authoritarians win presidential elections not only because of votes by racists or sexists, as so many leftists argued, but because of people who hated and feared an increasingly centralized national government they believed had stopped listening to them—even while it spied on them and bailed out big banks instead of helping failing families.

In such a polarized society, activism that ignores such people instead of bringing them along cannot ultimately succeed. Nor can activism that fails to distinguish the psychology of malcontented followers from that of their exploiters.

These suggestions derive from sustained relationships reaching across deep political divides as well as across differences of race, sex, ideology, and ability:

- **Establish informal relationships with those who benefit from the system you oppose.** In even the most pathological system, real sociopaths are few. Focus on finding common ground with the people you feel tempted to dismiss as hopelessly bigoted or ignorant. They won't start listening until they know *you* better, and not at all if they feel blamed or shamed.
- **Remember our common humanity.** Yes, it's important to keep insisting that marginalized differences receive respect, but emphasis on *difference alone* can alienate potential allies and, at worst, degenerate into splitting and name-calling. An extraterrestrial visitor to our planet would certainly note our different languages, places of origin, styles of love, and other divergences, but would also see us as one species, one obviously related worldwide family.
- **Be mindful of vocabulary.** A liberal nature-lover will get nowhere with a conservative rancher with words like “ecosystem” or “environment.” But, “This is beautiful country you have here!” can begin an entirely different and more productive conversation about the need to protect the land. Learn the vocabulary if those you wish to reach.
- **Listen deeply to others' stories.** Try empathic responses rather than defense-arousing debate or confrontation. Most support of unjust policies and practices, for example, comes from imagined fear of some Other. Once articulated, this fear can soften, opening possible opportunities to move beyond objectification and Othering into more mature ways to relate.
- **Model specific examples of successful, beneficial alternatives to what's harmful.** Glimpses of how things could be are more effective than relentless, shame-inducing catastrophizing, especially when you live the examples instead of merely arguing for them. Composting, for example, works better as both symbol and sensible soil-building practice than lecturing people on why they should be less wasteful.
- **Support reconciliatory efforts that do not depend on political parties.** A good action done by an identified Democrat will hold little worth for an entrenched Republican, and vice versa. Non-partisan action tends to garner less resistance and more trust, or at least less suspicion. Lamplighting cannot be politically partisan.

- **Do your own “shadow” work.** If you find it especially difficult to connect to those on the “other” side as suggested above, make sure to find a good friend or even therapist to do some shadow (dark side of yourself) work with. When shadow is well integrated it is a tremendous source of energy for renewal and deep empathy. When unintegrated, however, we tend to project our unowned shadow onto others. Failure to see humanity in another is a reliable indicator that shadow projection is at play.

Reminder: These and other suggestions and ideas herein are intended not to replace ordinary activism, but to provide alternatives for those of us yearning to make a beneficial difference.

Heartsteading: Circles of Lasting Deep Change



In 2007, I introduced the word “heartsteading” to mean “dwelling deeply in places through knowledge and love that strengthen over time in continual interactions between the human and the nonhuman.” Doing so would require “reweaving the sacred fabric of place, spirit, society, self, and heart,” preferably with help from wise elders and guiding mentors capable of opening awareness through dialog.

Humans have always fallen back on the small group to find support, solve problems, conduct ritual, and dream up alternative ways of being, especially during difficult times. *Heartsteading* names and relies on this persistent human instinct. Its counterparts and predecessors have gone by many names: althing, kibbutz, coven, public homeplace, worship circle, bible study, snailshell, Mothers’ Center, community of resistance, reality laboratory, counter-public sphere, hackerspace, SLOC, fab lab...

A *heartstead* is a small, local group designed for dreaming up practices of reenchancement and its implementation. It begins in communion, dedication, imagination, and dream. It can also be used for mutual support, collaborative problem-solving, resource-gathering, reflective listening and dialog, reclaiming of interpersonal strengths, deep storytelling, practical research, recovery from mainstream attitudes that do not serve, preservation of crafts and skills (“reskilling”), and ongoing education of self and group. Heartsteads can be ad hoc or long-lasting.

Why the "heart" in heartsteading? Psychologically understood, the heart is an imaginal core, a seat of affects that involve us in the world's doings. The heart's wisdom partakes of an embodiment and solidity that intellect alone cannot aspire to. Heart knowledge is holistic, centered and inclusive of head knowledge. To know from the heart is to know fully; to speak from the heart is to be sincere and open. To reflect, speak, and act from the heart issues an evolutionary challenge to soul-disconnecting economics, politics, cults, and sciences that would dominate life rather than participate in it.

Relying on the ecological principle of resilience, heartsteads rely on multiple backups and communication sources, preserving their infrastructure and culture through many means that offer some protection from obvious fragilities and risks of disconnection.

Unlike the homestead, the heartstead can be set up anywhere to form a circle of people dreaming together toward just, sustainable, and abundant forms of community that cultivate appreciation of Earth and all its creatures, including us. Their mood can move back and forth between lighthearted fun and serious work.

To encourage intimacy, it's best to start small. A circle of like-minded practical dreamers and storytellers meeting regularly will do.

For detailed information on setting up a heartstead, see the blog [“Heartsteading: Cooking Up the New.”](#)



7. Weaving Together a Transrevolutionary Organization



Guidelines

These guidelines come from a variety of ground-up endeavors that bring people together for personal and social transmutation. Consider using them to either grow a heartstead or join two or more of them into a larger group.

1. Start with a heartstead based in lamplighting or enchantivism.
2. Invite diversity. The more diversity of members, the richer, wiser, deeper, and more creative, inclusive, and adaptive the organization will be.
3. Replace the Big Machine metaphor of organization with that of the Net or Mosaic. Notice how the values change accordingly: from hierarchy, linearity, and control to connection, partnership, and integrity and beauty of design.
4. Spend time as a group reflecting on, asking for dreams about, and writing down the primary purpose, values, and key activities or projects of the organization. This charter can be altered to adapt to changing circumstances. Keep it of modest size.
5. Weed out narcissists, including covert ones. We can't eradicate pathological selfishness from society, but it has no place in a transrevolutionary organization.
6. Resolve to make no key decisions without collaboration with everyone. Sometimes actions must be taken that some people disagree with, but their voices will be heard respectfully and their predictions acknowledged when correct.
7. Agree on the bodies and routines that comprise organizational structure: key nodes and threads in the weave.
8. Agree on roles (changeable if need be) to fit strengths as people see them. Encourage people to make the roles their own.
9. Agree on types and frequencies of key meetings. Unless entirely social, meetings should be facilitated and time-limited and should use agendas that include written-down next

steps (what, who, by when) circulated after the meeting. However, do include a social component, perhaps at the beginning or end of each meeting.

10. Create spaces and times for informal discussion. Very often that's where difficulties are resolved and creative insights emerge rather than in more formal meetings.
11. Allow for edgy experimental "labs" on the periphery so prickly geniuses can work undisturbed.
12. Learn from the resilient natural world to make backups for everything: key roles, lines of communication, sources of income or energy, places to gather, etc.
13. Always take the individual and group unconscious into account, and maintain ways to listen in.
14. Where possible, include members' families and relationships in the mix. Nobody operates alone.
15. Recognize that no social structure can last if misaligned with its earthly ecosystem.

	Hierarchical	New organizational forms
Goal setting	Top-down	Decentralized
Power	Concentrated	Distributed
Size of units	Large	Small
Leadership function	Control, monitoring	Guidance, conflict management
Vision	Dictated	Emergent
Structure	Formal hierarchy	Team and work-group structures
Primary unit of analysis	Firm	Network
Boundaries	Durable, clearly set	Permeable, fuzzy
Objective	Reliability, replicability	Flexibility
Regulation	Vertical	Horizontal
Assets	Linked to particular units	Independent of unit, shared
Role Definition	Specialized, clear	Fuzzy, General
Uncertainty	Try to absorb	Try to adapt
Rights and duties	Permanent	Impermanent
Integrity	Rule-based	Relationship-based
Motivation	Efficiency	Innovation

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Thinking Big: 20 Principles of Ecoresilience (developed by Linda Buzzell and Craig Chalquist)

A dictionary definition of *resilience* refers to the capacity of individuals, communities, and ecosystems to respond and adapt to disturbance. Building on this, ecoresilience includes creative adaptation and response to environmental disturbance and trauma, global warming a pre-eminent and growing example.

The ongoing unraveling of every sector of our society and each ecosystem on the planet can feel overwhelming. With so many of our life support systems and those of countless other species coming apart, how can we go about healing the mess we've created? And how much can any one person or small group do in the face of a perfect storm of crises?

This huge project that theologian Thomas Berry called the "Great Work" of our time can sometimes feel too big, too overwhelming. So in order to take on our personal role in the shift towards a life-sustaining society, we also need to do the inner work of finding our own personal and local calling within this larger global project. No one person or group can successfully manage trying to fix it all.

And we must also discover the joy, excitement and peace of mind that comes from doing our part in this great adventure, surrounded by friends who share our passion and commitment to the restoration of life and health on our home planet.

The 20 Principles for Cultural Ecoresilience:

1. **Recognize Nature as Our Guide - *Know and align with the movements and patterns of the natural world.*** Contrary to our delusions of grandeur, in the long run humans are not actually in charge of this planet, nor can we indefinitely force it to fit our own selfish, short-sighted goals. To continue to survive as a species, we need to be in harmony with the rest of nature instead of fighting against it. Simply asking "What Would Nature Do?" or "How Would Nature Do This?" before taking any actions can help us begin to move in the right direction.
2. **Respect the Wild Around and Within Us - *Preserve greenspace and wild places – including in our hearts.*** This basic principle seems obvious to most environmentalists and it's critically important for true resilience that urban populations fully understand that nearby and distant less-human-controlled places – land and water - determine our fate. However, these places don't need to exclude humans. In fact places that we see as "wilderness" often diminish in the absence of the indigenous human caregivers integral to their ecosystem. We also need to understand that wild places and their inhabitants aren't just here to serve humans and that the rest of nature has intrinsic rights we ignore at our peril.
3. **Come home to where you live - *Return to earthly reality in acts of deep homecoming.*** To be truly resilient we need to leave behind the modern "nowhere and everywhere" fantasy bubble fostered by the media, cyber-communications and cheap, fossil-fueled travel. We can then relocalize and re-embed our lives, reorienting to actual earth time and space. The disconnection from our own local, bioregional life-support systems (and the habitats of our local animal and plant siblings) allows us to thoughtlessly damage specific earthplaces. We can rediscover the deep pleasure of emplacement as we relearn the historical, geographical, biological and even geological context of where we live and share it with our children and grandchildren. Finding or rediscovering a beloved place and truly committing ourselves to the welfare of its watersheds, land, air, animals, plants and people is one of the most exciting life paths we can undertake.

4. **Build Heartsteads** – *Create wisdom circles and gather around a common purpose.* We can organize local change efforts with people who resonate with a shared vision, goal, task, or dream of community that gives its members a sense of meaning, purpose and agency. For example, a Voluntary Simplicity Circle that met every two weeks in Santa Barbara, California for ten years forged deep bonds between participants and created support for making the kinds of changes each member wanted in their personal and activist lives.
5. **Replace Monoculture with Polyculture** – *Welcome in who and what has been silenced or excluded.* Nature abhors a monoculture! We need merely observe a cleared piece of open ground to see how nature deals with a vacuum: it is soon full of a wide variety of plants and animals. And to limit a field to one species of plant involves constant “weeding” as we vainly try to remove the polyculture that wants to move in. We can learn from this rule of nature as we create our heartsteads, circles and other human groups, opening our arms to all, even those our society might consider “weeds” or marginal. There can be no communal, political, or environmental renewal without a renewal of community and environmental justice. There can be no communal, political, or environmental revitalization without a renewal of truly inclusive community and social/environmental justice. This is no easy matter, of course, and we need a deep exploration of our various intersectionalities to understand where change needs to happen in our lives. It is especially important for those with “privilege” of any kind – European-origin, wealth, gender, sexual orientation, good health, etc. – to humbly undertake the hard work of facing how these advantages may blind us to the suffering of others – human or otherwise. Decolonization is a lifelong process.
6. **Start Small and Learn as We Go** - *Make small initial interventions coupled with constant assessment.* This principle, articulated by permaculturist David Holmgren as “Use Small and Slow Solutions,” guides us to start with least-harmful, low-tech, simpler, and time-proven solutions and reserve extreme measures for truly desperate situations. This approach is counterintuitive for many in modern industrial cultures as we are brought up to admire Big Everything. Forgetting that we live on a relatively small planet with limited resources in a backwater of a huge universe, we don’t realize that being a giant makes us ever more vulnerable. Resilience demands that we begin to think small and make nimble, strategic changes.
7. **Broaden Your Focus from Linear to Systemic** – *Shift your attention from simple causes to complex interactions.* Systems and Complexity Theory teach us that life is much more complicated than simple pushes and pulls, causes and effects. Living systems are characterized not only by their elements but by the interactions between elements. It is necessary to think the way nature does: in the round, focusing more on process and interaction than on content and element.
8. **Simplify, Decentralize, Interlink** – *Keep an appropriate scale.* Starting small (Principle #6) reminds us of the importance of not growing beyond nature’s limits. Poorly designed overcomplexity governed by giant centralized monocultures is the bane of modern industrial society and leaves us vulnerable to collapse. Think of the Titanic, the giant ship “too big to fail” that ended up on the bottom of the ocean. Simpler systems are often more robust – and can be interlinked into a highly resilient, interconnected web of new, earth-based cultures.

9. **Act Local, Share Global - *Be helpful well beyond your community.*** Rebuilding local community and relocalizing the basics of life – food, companionship, building materials, medicine, entertainment, work, our support systems, the economy and more – is a basic principle of sustainability. But no community can be fully self-sufficient, especially in a world in which humanity has long been a planetary species. Centuries before modern globalization taught us its cruel lessons of displacement and irresponsibility, pockets and cultures of humanity spread information and trade networks wherever we lived, in conditions pleasant or inhospitable. The counter to a *Road Warrior* post-collapse chaos of “all against all,” as Hobbes put it long ago, is for groups and communities to pool resources, share knowledge, build kinship webs, and form strong alliances based on common needs.
10. **Rely on Intelligent Redundancy - *Set up backup plans and alternative resources.*** Or as they say in the computer world: back up, back up, back up! The secret of ecoresilience, whether physical or cultural, is having multiple backups, fallbacks, and interconnections. No one should be the sole expert on anything. No single energy source, communication pathway, fire escape road, water source, etc. can serve any group for long.
11. **Create Wise Governance - *Reimagine community leadership developmentally.*** This is probably the most difficult cultural ecoresilience principle of all, perhaps because women and men have been pondering “right governance” for millennia without taking developmental maturity into account. For our era and critical situation, we need to rely on the inclusive practices of council, restorative justice, egalitarian power-sharing, and peaceful conflict resolution to resolve inevitable differences – while also encouraging natural leadership. Inspired by indigenous wisdom, we need to create initiatory procedures through which leaders must be tested to guarantee their responsibility, self-reflexivity, wisdom, courage, and emotional maturity.
12. **Decommodify Life – *Redesigning the Economy.*** To create wise and equitable governance, we must take back control of community leadership from those who benefit most from today’s corrupt global economy. The word economy comes from the Greek “oikos” (home) and means management of the household. But as Senator Gaylord Nelson famously remarked, “The economy is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the environment.” Our society’s privileging of the money economy over everything else has gotten us into the mess we’re in: we have turned almost everything, including human beings and the rest of nature, into a commodity to be bought and sold in the marketplace for profit, with disastrous results.
13. **Adopt an Ethos of Care - *Make sure everyone is embraced.*** Another part of reinventing community governance involves revisioning local and global care systems. We need to take a deep look at our crumbling family and community support networks to see how they can be creatively redesigned for maximum physical and mental well-being for all – including “all our relatives”.
14. **Prepare Crisis and Trauma Teams – *Emergency readiness and training first responders.*** Rapidly degenerating global conditions demand robust and resilient crisis preparation and backup plans. We need the redundancy mentioned above: multiple ways to perform each function. And as part of our redesign of community governance, we need to reinvent emergency preparation and community protection practices, rethinking the

deep meaning of true “security” philosophically and realistically, while not ignoring potential threats from flood, drought, fire, toxins, pandemics, criminal behavior -- or even military attacks. We need to train psychologically-savvy, flexible, resilient and redundant first responder trauma and ecoresilience teams to help the community survive proliferating extreme weather and economic disruption events as well as traumatic social events resulting from the unraveling or collapse of our culture.

15. **Design for Replenishment - Build nothing that does not enrich the natural world and support future generations.** As William McDonough and Michael Braungart observe in their excellent book *Cradle to Cradle*, we have long been entranced by industries and products that ravage and pollute. Merely making them less destructive, while useful in the short run, remains within the alienating worldview that gave rise to them. The same might be said for cultural structures like overlarge cities, megacorporations and even nations. Instead, we can design for right-sized personal and ecological health, productivity, and abundance. What we make can be good for the natural world of which we are a living expression.
16. **Combine Old Knowledge with New- Integrate the deep wisdom of the past with the smartest and most nature-friendly knowledge and practices of our era.** For true ecoresilience in the 21st Century we need to combine traditional and contemporary knowledge and practice. This includes educating our next generations with the understanding and practical/cultural skills needed to survive and thrive in very different conditions from the ones we now live in - instead of preparing them for a world that is rapidly passing away. Keepers of knowledge, tradition, and resources can help multiply back up, diversify, and safeguard what the community depends on to survive and flourish.
17. **Develop a Deep Appreciation and Understanding of Human Culture - Preserve, learn from, and expand the humanities.** In addition to practical skills, each person needs access to the stories that provide individual and collective guidance and call most deeply to our hearts, minds and souls. From humanity’s earliest days, gathering around the fire to hear tales has been basic to our species. This kind of learning finds nourishment in the tales and lore of every human culture, including history, philosophy, folkways, and the stories we have told and continue to tell about our life on this planet. The humanities engage us in discussions about primary values, about what matters most in life, and about paths that lead to fruition and wholeness and those we should not take. This is how we learn about human nature and what it needs, including justice, beauty, and purpose.
18. **Slow Down and Reflect Deeply - Regrounding ourselves so we can stay sane during “The Long Emergency”.** When we’re in an extreme situation and are working towards quick individual or collective behavior change “or else,” we need to pace ourselves, be especially gentle and patient with our progress and tend the inner psychospiritual ecosystem with ongoing reflective practices, both personal and collective. There are many ways to do this. Artful community guides will be able to help us individually and collectively keep our spirits and positive energy up as we confront the challenges and make the necessary changes in how we live. This is a challenging and delicate endeavor, as we need to find a balance between “doom and gloom” and unrealistic escapist fantasy: the place where an accurate assessment of our situation is accompanied by enjoyment and gratitude for the richness of nature and all our relationships.

19. **Explore Reverent Practices** – *Cultivate awe and appreciation of the more-than-human.* By exploring a wide variety of possibilities, we can discover and benefit from a consciousness-raising practice of our choosing and explore a wide variety of possibilities. Many practices increase the feeling of awe and love for the world and its cosmic frame. Let us not hesitate to call such activities “spiritual” if we choose, although “reverent” might be an alternative for some.
20. **Put Arts at the Heart** – *Celebrate, create, and ceremonialize.* Too many environmentalists are caught up in gloom, fear and panic. While it’s true that the situation is critical and life-threatening and we must yell “Fire!” to wake up our communities, it’s also a psychological fact that most people can’t effectively process unremitting traumatic information and soon numb out and resist such messages. As part of keeping our community’s spirits up during Transition, we can foster and integrate play, festival, dance, music, drama and all the arts to nurture the cultural life of the community, share people's rites of passage through the human lifespan, enjoy the experience of being together and celebrate appreciative ties to Earth and the seasons. As we become more effective ecoresilience leaders and transition guides we learn to help ourselves and others balance the bad news with these simple joys of life: good food, music, inspiring stories, life-saving humor, beautiful art, joyful dance, kind friends and exciting, earth-enhancing projects.

8. Additional Resources

[Chalquist.com](http://www.chalquist.com) to learn, network, and stay in touch. Key resources there:

- “Lamplighters: A New Kind of Change Agent”:
<https://www.chalquist.com/post/lamplighters-a-new-kind-of-change-agent>
- “Carrying Light in Dark Times: Resources for Lamplighters”:
<https://www.chalquist.com/post/carrying-light-in-dark-times-resources-for-lamplighters>

Also:

Beautiful Trouble: <http://beautifultrouble.org>

Enchantivism group at Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/enchantivism/>

Enchantivism page at Chalquist.com: <http://www.chalquist.com/enchantivism>

Edutopia Diversity Resources: <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/preparing-cultural-diversity-resources-teachers>

Good Grief Network: <https://www.goodgriefnetwork.org/about/>

“Heartenings”:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJioE0HU9EjGqKp5tl4lAP7Kk9V2LITFx>

How love can help repair social inequality (Chloé Valdary):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dB7gsp_zDZc&t=24s

Inspiration as a tool for change (Sara Salo): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUbB_-lNaQs

Institute for Dream Studies: <https://institutefordreamstudies.org>

Lamplighter Trilogy and *Tales of Terrania Rising*: <http://www.chalquist.com/fiction>

Permaculture principles: <https://permacultureprinciples.com>

Practice of Council: <https://beyondusandthem.org/about-us/what-is-council/>

What is terrapsychology? <http://www.chalquist.com/terrapsyche>