

Session Four: Unlearning Our Programming

Unlearning for Change Agents
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Session 4.1: Unlearning Saving the World

I used the phrase ‘The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know Is Possible’ because our minds think that it’s impossible. Because our minds kind of think that things are going to be the way they’ve always been. And besides, even if we get a glimpse of the more beautiful world, we don’t know how to get there. So the minds is like, “Yeah, it’s not possible.” But the heart knows otherwise. So that’s why I titled it that way. As for what it looks like specifically, again, I’ve had experiences that I’m like, “Yeah, that’s part of it.”

Some things that come to me are, if I put myself in that world, and fast-forward to a future that might be six hundred years from now, most of the time the loudest sounds that I can hear are the sounds of children playing and birds singing. And I am totally at ease drinking from any stream that I come across. I’m not so guarded. And any human being feels safe to walk at night, at least feels safe from human beings, to walk at night anywhere, maybe not from lions.

But it’s so much more than that. It’s a world where all of our material possessions are made with mastery. Well, not all, but they are made in a journey to mastery with full heart and care by people in the flower of their creativity. It’s a world... see I hesitate to go there because then people are going to think that I’m a new-age airhead, but maybe some of you have kind of visited the world of communication with animals and plants and energies of the earth and unseen beings. Even the bird listeners who can go into the forest... and there are not many forests with enough birds and a coherent enough eco-system and enough quiet, distance from noise pollution, to do this, but indigenous people could do this... they could hear from the bird songs what was happening miles away. Because if there is some event, some predator, some disturbance, that changes the songs of the birds there and then the birds listening to those songs change their songs, and the ones listening to those change theirs, and so you have what seems like a supernatural ability to know what is going on around you through the songs of the birds, through the pattern of the wind and the leaves, through standing knee-deep in a

stream and being so attuned to the ebb and the sway of the current that you know what is happening miles away... Those abilities are part of our birthright, really, and beyond that, even. So the unfolding of human potential that is possible when it is no longer suppressed and distracted by the spectacle that we are offered today is just... it strains belief... and I hesitate to say what I believe... what I have come into contact with about the future, because speaking too much about it does not serve.

But imagine the most amazing experience that you've had, maybe something that you couldn't even explain scientifically... My friend had a knee-replacement surgery. She's convalescing, going to physical therapy every day, staying on a house boat. And she looks outside and there is a seagull looking right in the window. And the seagull has one leg. And, like, the other leg is broken, dangling there, and it's standing on one leg, and it comes every day and is looking right at her. That's like a little hint of a wholeness and an intimacy that is a possible future. There is a through-line, a time-line from here-and-now to a world where that kind of thing is the warp and woof of life. Where that kind of thing isn't seen even as extraordinary.

Just as, the fact that I can breathe words into the air and you understand them and have an experience—like, that technology is only 40,000 years old, representational language, but we don't think that that's extraordinary. That's just like the film on the surface of what is possible for human beings. So that's why it's really hard to describe how beautiful the world could be. Because we don't even have the experiences to weave an explanation, to weave a description from. Just these little traces, these little threads, the seagull looking in the window, or whatever experience you've had, that blew your mind. Those are little scintillas of light from the future that are.

And you know it's not even necessarily 'The Future'... We all know that there is many possible futures that co-exist in a quantum superposition of states. There is not one objective reality out there. That's part of the story of separation. Reality is a conversation. It's an interaction. It's a relationship. So the question then is which of these futures are you coming into relationship with? Which are you aligning to? That experience that you had of deep communion, amazement, and mystery, what does that call you to be? To the extent that we listen to that call, we bring the future from which that experience came, into reality. And we establish a path from there to that future.

Session 4.2: Finding a Common Ground

If I were talking to a 65-year-old man from Tennessee who watches Fox News, I would not articulate the story of Interbeing. I would speak from the understanding of the story of Interbeing. And I would try to speak in a way that communicates to him and that can be received. Like I might say something about corporate welfare. And, I'm a small

business man and if I go bankrupt the government isn't going to bail me out. Why do they bail out the banks? I might say something like that. Just to, like, say something that fits into his vocabulary of ideas and concepts, but that also violates them in some way.

Or if I am talking to an evangelical person. "So, this earth, um, did we earn that or did God give it to us, as a gift?" And they'll say, "Well that was a gift." And I'll say, "Well, what if I gave you, or what if you gave me a beautiful carpet that you spent a long time and a lot of effort making. And I said, "Thank you." And then you came to my house and you saw it smeared with shit and covered with stains and there's vomit and beer spills on it. What would you think? You'd think that I was disrespecting you. You'd feel insulted. So we do honor or insult to the giver by how we treat the gift. And you just said this earth was a gift." That's like an example of speaking in a way that can be received but coming from... Like, the basic understandings of Interbeing can be translated into many different languages.

And, yeah, there may be a limit into how much can fit into one of these other world views, but I find that there is usually something. There is usually some point of connection that can be made, because it is a universal impulse that we have today to, on some level all of us recognize... on some level... I am just going to assert this, even though some people would swear up and down that they disagree, but I am going to assert that on some level nobody agrees with the agreements that run our world. Nobody thinks this is working. Everybody is a rebel. So knowing that, I believe that there is always some way to speak to that, to blow air on that fire.

And I think that on some level, also, everybody knows that a more beautiful world is possible. Everybody is here because they want to do something great, they want to do something beautiful, they want to do something magnificent. That is also universal. Everybody here wants to love and be loved. So, yeah, it's not a matter... I'm not out there to proselytize my particular version of a new story. I want to create conditions that serve the birth of that story, and serve the spread of that story. So in one situation, it might just be, like, a humorous comment, a friendly gesture. Because any... Well, humor, for one thing... Can often communicate, "You don't take this seriously, do you? Because I don't. This thing that we all think is real? Nah. I don't believe it, either." Like, that's one thing that humor can do. And kindness or generosity can communicate, "It's not everyone for themselves after all. Because, look! Here's a counter-example."

So, those kinds of things, like, to actually give people an experience that doesn't fit into the story of separation, that's a lot more important than trying to get them to intellectually accept a certain world-view. Because by giving them those experiences that don't fit, they become more open to a new story. The old story doesn't make as much sense. You're preparing the ground that way. It's a lot more important. Like, the idea that people change their minds when their defenses are overcome by superior evidence and logic, that's not how anyone changes their mind. You have to change the conditions.

Beliefs, and systems of beliefs are attracted to a state of being. The state of being is the product of the totality of that person's experiences, going back maybe even through a genetic lineage. Therefore if you want the beliefs to change and the story to change you have to offer differences experiences, that change the state of being that magnetize a different belief or a different story that then assigns different roles and different meanings to life. Just because the story is something that is kind of attracted to the state of being doesn't mean that it's irrelevant. It's a key part of the circle. The story creates meaning, creates belief.

Like, a lot of the things we need to do in this world don't make sense if they're not part of a story of say, for example, of a 500-year time frame of healing for the planet. Like, if you have that story that, "Yeah, that's what we are here to do right now. And its going to take a long time. And so these small changes... taking care of this one stream, for example, that is important." Like that, in the narrative of climate-change-is-going-to-destroy-us-in-five-years-unless-we-do-something-about-it-right-away, then you're just wasting your time if you're just taking care of one little stream or housing a homeless person or feeding a hungry child. You're wasting your time in that story. Now I think that there are serious problems with the dominant narrative of climate change. And I won't go into that now.

What I am saying is that the story generates meaning and purpose. Like, life purpose isn't, like, some individual thing. Life purpose is also the product of our relationship, of a set of agreements with other people and maybe even beyond other people. It's the product of community, it's a product of relationship. So by serving a new story, either by articulating it... yeah, articulating it can be useful. (Like that's kind of what I do, you know, publically.) But service to the story of Interbeing, the story of reunion, the story of connection, the story of a beautiful healed earth. Service to that doesn't necessarily meaning telling the story in words. It means acting from that story, bringing people into that story by giving them experiences that are of that story. So by serving that story we are creating new or different or next meanings and life purposes for other people to step into.

Yeah, so all of the steps in this process, like the story creates the system, the system creates the story. You can intervene in any stage.

Session 4.3: We Are All In This Together

The beliefs and stories that we hold are not the result of an independent choice by the neo-liberal separate self choosing from the marketplace of ideas. Belief is a collective function. So in order to maintain a belief you need people around you to echo that belief

back at you, to amplify that belief. Because we are not separate. We are not separate individuals. We are the totality of relationships.

Yeah, the echo chamber effect can operate both ways. If you are surrounded by people who reinforce the belief system that you grew up in, the belief system that maybe has become limiting for you, then that's going to hold you there. And if you want to practice a tender, young new set of beliefs, you are going to need help. Because so much of the environment is going to be pulling you back into the dominant thoughts and beliefs of our culture.

And it's really hard to maintain it by yourself. You know, you have a realization, you go to a transformational workshop or something, or you have a mind-blowing experience... I don't know you take psychedelics at some festival or something and, like, "Oh! I get it now! It's all about love! It's all One!" Or whatever realization you have or think you have. And then you go back to the routines and the relationships that you came from and all of those things pull you back into the thoughts and beliefs that you came from. So when you have these experiences that invite you into a new state of being... Yeah, if you're like me you're going to need other people to hold that belief, to hold you there.

Because if you're like me you're going to start doubting. You're going to start vacillating. I'm not some, you know, genius, or some special being from another planet who, like, is coming with the new knowledge or anything like that. I'm basically an antenna and a mouth-piece for a worldview, for a story, for this being that is emerging all over the place. And, you know, it needs a hands, it needs feet, it needs a brain, it needs a mouth. All of us are being enrolled in the birth of a more beautiful world.

So I'm only able to do what I do because I am so held, and so supported, and every time, when I have that moment when I'm just about to give it up, where I am just like, "Yeah, maybe I am wrong about everything." Like, I have those moments a lot. Where I just doubt everything that I've been saying and maybe I'm just full of shit. And maybe I'm going out and making these speeches and I'm just giving people an emotional high that makes their pathetic complicity in the status quo all the more tolerable because they had this moment of hope. Like, yeah, I have these doubts all the time. And I don't know! Phew! I am totally capable of deluding myself into thinking that I am doing some great thing, meanwhile just maintaining the edifice of my own vanity. I am just as capable as anyone else of doing that.

So what I rely on are people who I trust to speak back to me the things I'm saying to them. And to say it in different ways. And to confirm that I'm not crazy. To hold this reality collectively. I can not hold it myself. The age of the guru is over. The age of one person holding a reality that everyone else can then step into. Like, we have seen in recent times what that does. Then they end up stepping into a reality that serves him. I don't trust myself to do that. And I'm glad that I don't have to do that. Because right now we have... Like the consciousness that maybe once upon a time reposed in these gurus

now is spread out. It's popping up everywhere. The time of the wisdom lineages to become no longer secret, but to become universal. That's here.

So I'll say, like, yeah, it's important to have relationships and community to hold us in the emerging story of Interbeing. Because we still live among systems, institutions, that are through-and-through expressions of the story of separation. Especially the money system, but not only. So we need a counter-veiling force that can hold us in a new culture of belief and then of practice too. We are really in it together.

And that means, perhaps, for you, once you take that in, it might signal the end of a time of loneliness, where it seemed like you were the only one. And where you had to exert tremendous effort of will to maintain your beliefs. And to not just give up, thinking that you're crazy and that it's impossible. Like maybe you held that for a long time and I honor you if you did. And I honor the earlier generations that did that without so much community and support. But those times are changing, and the time of loneliness may be coming to an end, where you no longer have to hold it on your own, where there are others who hold it even more strongly than you do. Except when they don't. And then you can hold it for them. That's how it works. When I can not hold it, when I am too weak, someone else can be strong for me. This is how I operate. To the extent that I inhabit a story of Interbeing, it's because I am held there. It's been given to me. It's not an accomplishment.

And everybody who takes that next step. And it's not like.. I mean, there's no one I've met who is even fifty one percent in that story. Although I've met, like, some indigenous people, maybe, but you know the programming is so deep. So it's not like anyone is fully in it. But to the extent that we are taking a next step into it. And everybody takes a unique next step, depending on the particular corner of the story of separation that they came from, the particular compliment and configuration of wounds and traumas that we have received. Like everybody comes from a slightly different place and is forging a slightly different path back toward Interbeing, toward reunion.

Every time you take that step, every time anyone takes that step, then, yeah, that is also the building of a morphic field. So even if you're not somebody who is my confidante, or my tutor, or my mentor, who is directly holding me when I am just a mess. Even if you're not that, even if I never meet you, everything that you do, your private struggles, your secret choices, that come from love, that come from compassion, that come from, "What is it like to be you?" Everything that you do from that place also strengthens my ability to stay in that place. That's how we serve each other. It's not only through explicit communities, although those are important. But you can trust that everything you do is contributing to that field. When you do it from that field, and in service to that field, it will have an impact. And that's what I mean when I say that we are all in this together.

Session 4 Invitation: Unlearning Despair

Ok, so in this session there were a few different themes, but I think that the main motivating intention was a release from despair. And it think it was clear that despair is a story on top of a deep, maybe even archetypal emotion or a feeling. And that the story brings forth the feeling just as much as the feeling attracts the story. The story being a certain causal account of the way that change happens in the world and how you can either be a contributor to a positive change or are wasting your life.

So the unlearning here, or the fast, going to be, on one level, a fast from despair, but you can't just make yourself stop feeling it. So really it's a fast from the causal apparatus that we take for granted in this culture that either diminishes you to a place of worthlessness or inflates your self-importance. So it could be a fast from either one of those, a fast from a story of worthlessness or a story of self-importance.

I like to use the metaphor of Nelson Mandela's grandmother. I'm totally making this up, okay? I don't know if actually in real life if his grandmother was an important person in his life. But you can imagine that this man who changed the course of history, and if anyone would be a great man, an influential man, someone who had a big effect on the world it would be Nelson Mandela. But if you ask, "Why was he able to hold peace through decades in prison? And to avert a course of blood-shed in South Africa?" Maybe it was because he had a special grandmother when he was a little boy who filled him with so much acceptance and so much love and so much strength that he was able to do what he did. If you accept that possibility, maybe the most important person in South Africa wasn't Nelson Mandela at all. Maybe it was his grandmother. Just to say that we do not know what the long-term effect of our actions is going to be.

That means that our culturally prescribed values, our culturally prescribed ways of perceiving what is important and what isn't, are unreliable. And we can not navigate by them. And how much of your despair comes from a blind acceptance of that account of change and that account of what's important and what isn't, who is important and who isn't? That causal framework could elevate you to somebody who you imagine yourself then being more important, doing more important work than somebody else. Or, most likely, it will cast you into the realm of the unimportant. And it will constantly lobby you to do less. It's like this worm in your brain that says, "What you're doing doesn't count, it doesn't matter, you're not important, you're wasting your time." And so to understand that that is... You don't actually know that. That is a story. You don't know if you're wasting your time. At least not according to that logic.

There might be something else inside you that recognizes, "Yeah, this is the most important thing I could be doing right now. And that is a waste of time." So the fast here is from that narrative that inflates or diminishes you. And once that's clear, as that clears away, your sensitivity to the inner guidance becomes more acute. And you no longer

need to look like you're saving the world. So we could say that it's a fast from world-saving, a fast from being important. And you will see how that lifts the despair. Or reveals the source of the despair, the wound underneath the despair. Which may not have anything to do with the story at all, but it was maybe from an experience.

So like all of the other fasts, you maybe will experience withdrawal symptoms. Withdrawal from, on the one hand, maybe the constant assurance that you're doing something special and important, or withdrawal from the opposite, the somehow... I mean it can kind of be, like, comfortable and familiar to be diminished. And as those judgments and stories clear you have more access, both to a different navigational system. And to what might hurt underneath the story of despair.

Yeah, so I hope that it's clear what I am inviting you to fast from. Again, the story of self-importance, the story of "I'm worthless, I'm not important." The story of, "It doesn't matter; what I am doing doesn't matter; the problems are too big." That story might come up, but, temporarily, you're fasting from it. And see who you are in the absence of that story. That's the invitation. Again, thank you for your participation. Thank you for your participation in this course. May it bear fruit unfolding over many weeks and months and years ahead.