

PAMPHLET 91

Renewal, High Energy, and Culture Change

By

Tom Heuerman, Ph. D.

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I invite you to visit:

<https://www.amorenaturalway.com>

A recent speech to Ohio Head Start workers:

(I used my photography with this speech)

My late friend and colleague Bob Terry, author of *For Whites Only*, *Authentic Leadership*, and *Seven Zones for Leadership* once said to me when discussing organizational transformation: “Sometimes I don’t have a clue about how organizations change.”

I chuckled when Bob said this for sometimes I don’t have a clue either.

With that caveat I’d like to share with you some of my story and some of what I have learned along the way as I, like you, try to navigate a chaotic and uncertain world.

Ponder what I have to say: Use what you can and throw out the rest as you take your own life’s journey.

I began my career in the late 60’s after graduation from the University of Minnesota with a degree in sociology and psychology. I was married after my freshman year, had a child soon after, and had to pay my own way. I was terrified. I graduated on time and was so scared that I got almost straight A’s.

I became a special agent in the United States Secret Service. I spent a year in Minneapolis where I protected former vice president Hubert Humphrey—a kind and optimistic man.

I transferred to Chicago where I was a member of the elite counterfeit squad. I also worked at the White House and protected former President Richard Nixon—a shy and dark man.

I left the Secret Service and fell into the abyss of alcoholism. I never saw it coming. After two years in the depths of hell, my father, bless his soul, told me the truth and I spent a month in a tough alcohol treatment center.

I experienced community, human connection, and true compassion at this treatment center. I learned that values matter, and I left determined to live a value driven life.

I then had nine management positions in 18 years at the Star Tribune Newspaper in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In each position I led organizations through renewal and transformation. In my last position I led a 4,500 employee business unit through nationally recognized change.

It was this experienced that opened my eyes and my heart to the vast untapped human potential in our organizations.

I left the corporate world in early 1994 to seek deeper authenticity in all areas of my life full time.

When I left the Star Tribune I said to colleagues that I don't know what you will hear about what I am doing in the years ahead, because I don't know what I will be doing but whatever you hear know that I will be doing what makes me feel alive.

I left the Star Tribune and went to Africa for wildlife photography, began to consult, began to write, and began a Ph.D. program, which I completed in 1997 at age 52.

I spent 2001 living on the side of the San Juan Mountains in Colorado where I sat in the natural hot springs for hundreds of hours and 4-wheeled and photographed the mountain beauty.

In 2002, I moved to the northwestern Minnesota and married the love of my life.

I have certainly felt alive since I left the corporate world.

I believe that our collective survival in a world in crisis depends on all of us choosing the aliveness of deep authenticity over lives of quiet desperation.

We must not look to others to lead. We must assume personal responsibility for our collective well-being.

Abraham Maslow wrote that to save our world we must create the “good person.” He defined the good person as:

The self-evolving person,

The fully human person,

The self-actualizing person....

Long ago Confucius wrote that the cultivation of the person must be the root of everything else.

I truly believe that in the chaos of today’s world, we must focus first on being authentic and whole--and then on being good leaders, followers, and team members. Otherwise we end up with inauthentic and neurotic leaders who no one will follow into uncertainty.

I want to share with you some of the core principles I have learned that help me stay in a place of high energy in my life as I strive to become more authentic and whole. These principles also work in organizations to rally people to a better future.

The list is of the principles that I feel passionate about.

I make no claims that they are “the” right and only principles.

Instead, I share them in the spirit of invitation and invite you to think about what beliefs guide your life.

Photo of a great gray owl

I see reality as it is.

Change begins with seeing reality as it is:

Being alive, being better people, and the solutions to our problems are inseparable from a new personal awareness.

We can only work on those things we are conscious of.

All great religions agree with writers as diverse as Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, philosopher and author Tom Morris, and organizational researcher and author Jim Collins along

with 12-step programs that change begins with seeing reality as it is.

For myself I ask:

What do I feel?

What is my impact on others?

What is lurking in my shadow side?

What are my strengths and limitations?

What am I doing in my life that I hate doing and need to stop?

What relationships are toxic?

Almost 31 years ago I did a fearless and searching moral inventory of myself for the first time. I had to do it to get out of the treatment center.

I was scheduled to share my inventory with a Catholic priest. I was raised in the Lutheran church. I felt intimidated. I sat in the chair across from the priest and looked down. I began to read my transgressions from my values. I thought, "He must really think I am an awful person."

Finally I got brave and looked at him. He looked totally bored. I realized that he heard this and much worse every day. I believe that in doing this inventory and sharing it with another, I rejoined the human race.

I passed my 5th Step, they let me out of treatment, and I have continued the practice of self-examination.

As leaders we need to see the reality of our organizations and do the organizational equivalent of the alcoholic's 4th and 5th Steps on a regular basis.

What is our need for renewal?

What truths are we not talking about?

What losses are we not acknowledging?

What strategies are failing?

What programs are obsolete?

What are we pretending not to know?

And, most important, what future do we see for ourselves?

Let me ask: what crossroads in life are you at? You're organization?

Photo of old church

Let me show you one version of our institutional reality.

This is the mechanistic world view reality that sees people and organizations as lifeless machines.

It is a dark and anti-human and anti-spirit reality.

We know this reality.

Disengaged workers:

--A recent Gallup poll shows 74% of American workers are disengaged clock-watchers who can't wait to go home. Twenty percent of them are actively disengaged meaning they are actively working against your efforts every day.

Their "discretionary energy"—the energy available to them beyond that needed to keep their jobs—is going elsewhere, lost to their organizations & costing hundreds of billions of dollars a year.

Failed change efforts:

Related to this disengagement is the fact that 75% of change efforts are deemed failures by those who lead them. Failed change efforts cost industry additional billions each year.

Unsustainable organizations:

Also related is the data that the average life expectancy of Fortune 500 companies is only 46 years. Yet some companies thrive for hundreds of years. This is the poorest actual to potential life expectancy of any species on the planet.

Last year alone 257 public companies with assets of 258 billion declared bankruptcy.

How do we measure the cost of failed companies—to people, to families, and to communities?

The disengagement, failed change efforts, and unsustainable organizations clearly show that our traditional ways of leading organizations are not working in today's world.

Our systems as we created them are failing. And if our organizations and institutions are in decline so are our people—Gallup reports that 29% of workers say their work lives affect their physical health negatively.

Most of our institutions and organizations are:

Not serving people as originally intended.

We must go deeper.

We must renew them.

There is another world view and it is the potential filled ecological or living-system world view that sees people and organizations as being alive, energetic, and creative.

Photo of monarch butterfly

I see vast human potential

Vast human potential is available to us.

Remember point A on the sigmoid curve yesterday? Everything beyond that point is human potential.

Gallup reports that only 20% of workers feel they do what they do best every day. Jobs are way too small for people.

What huge potential is available to us.

When I led the change effort at the Star and Tribune, I saw and felt the vast human potential in myself and everyone else. This powerful insight changed my life forever and led me to leave the organizational world.

Folks, I saw women and men long among the walking dead in our organization come back to life when allowed to participate and when treated with basic human respect. Human beings are incredibly resilient, and I see the same thing in my consulting work.

Many of our organizations are mediocre, dumbed down, and we made them that way. That means we can change them.

I know you know the vast potential in people from the work you do. I can only imagine the frustration you must feel when you can not bring forth that potential.

What a difference there is between reality and our potential.

We must see the reality of what is today and then focus on the vision of what could be for our future. This is the work of leaders.

Let me ask: can you see the vast potential on the other side of mediocrity?

Photo of elephants in front of Mount Kilimanjaro

I have a determined sense of purpose

We must have a determined sense of purpose as we go forward in life.

Our purpose is why we exist other than to make money or be efficient.

My purpose, articulated about a dozen years ago, is to live a life of emotional, intellectual, and spiritual adventures and to share what I learn with others. Basically I am my own learning laboratory.

Purpose is important because if we know the “why” of our lives, we can bear any “how.”

Let me ask: do you have a consistency of intent?

Photo of lighthouse

My core beliefs guide me as I go into the unknown

Our lives are the vehicle through which we express our deepest values.

We talked about values yesterday, so I will simply say “Make the personal life choice to return to the idealism that you began your careers with.”

Let me ask: What really matters to you?

Photo of Crazy Horse monument

I go toward an every-expanding vision

Leaders are obsessed with the future. As leaders of our own lives we should think about what we want for our time here is short.

Vision is a picture of the future we want to create.

The Crazy Horse monument near Custer, South Dakota is a powerful example of purpose and vision:

During the early months of 1947, sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski sat and looked at the mountain for five days and five nights. We can only imagine what he thought. At the end of the five days he decided to carve the entire mountain rather than just the top 100 feet as originally planned.

His vision now included:

The largest sculpture ever undertaken,

A Native American medical center,

The University of North America for Native Americans, and

A Native American cultural center.

After all, Korczak said when he came down from the mountain: “I had no where else to go.”

Korczak died many years ago. The work on Crazy Horse continues today led by his wife, Ruth, and 9 of their 10 children.

Korczak’s vision went far beyond what was expected of him and his vision will become real.

Perhaps on a smaller scale, we can also create visions that go far beyond what is expected of us and those visions can become real.

Let me ask: What do you want to create in your life? In your organization?

Photo of Kennebunkport, Maine moonrise

I plan, do, reflect, adapt

We can all become pioneers who lead as we proceed into the unknown.

Close your eyes and imagine for a moment the first settlers crossing eastern Colorado by covered wagon and seeing the outline of the Rocky Mountains in front of them.

They had much in common with today's adventurers who create a new culture.

Different journey—same dynamics

One external journey, the other within.

What can people know of the pioneers as they pursued their vision?

They were searching for a better life, they were courageous, they believed in themselves, and they had confidence in their ability to overcome unknown obstacles.

They understood that life had risk and uncertainty. Their dream was powerful, and they would not quit.

I imagine the pioneers were afraid a good part of the time and felt overwhelmed and inadequate frequently.

They knew there were no guarantees of success. They made mistakes, and they suffered. Less hardy souls ridiculed them. Sometimes their leaders were selfish, cowardly, and incompetent.

The pioneers found their way as they proceeded. Some of the wagon trains succumbed to the elements, and people perished. These first pioneers knew they might not have a better life for themselves, yet they were paving the way for future generations. What a grand legacy.

Like all ventures into the unknown, the settler's journey began with a few. Soon, more people followed. Those who were first inspired

those who came later. The same dynamics are true today as people transform their lives and their organizations.

How do you know your vision is the right one and that people are doing the right thing? You don't know. You cannot know. You must have faith and be optimistic. You must adapt along the way.

Let me ask: do you evolve as you create?

Photo of people kissing great gray whales

I connect with myself, others, and nature

Quantum physics teaches us that all of life, from the smallest sub-atomic particle to the galaxies, is interconnected and life-like bundles of energy that transform one another when they connect.

If I ever doubted that I am connected to all of nature that doubt disappeared when I looked into the eye of the great gray whale in the Baja of California. The 40 foot and 40 ton whale slowly surfaced below our small skiff. She brought her new child with her and gently introduced her to the awestruck tourists. The great gray whale allowed us to pet her and kiss her before she glided down into the sea again.

In our institutions, nothing is so beautiful in a group than people creating together.

More than 30 years ago I was a member of the counterfeit squad in the Chicago office of the U.S. Secret Service.

It was a grand group motivated by a powerful sense of purpose. I love the men I worked with and we did work to be proud of. They inspire me today.

On the other hand, nothing is uglier in a group than disconnected souls who are petty, small, political, and self-serving.

Some years ago I pounded the table in frustration and said to an executive team...."This is the million dollar advice....They looked at me intently. You will not change this company if you do not talk to one another." They looked befuddled.

With another client I stood in front of a group of employees and yelled, "You are losing your humanity. You have lost the ability to connect with other people.

You hate management, you hate the union, you hate one another and you hate yourselves.

Some of you beat your wife's and children, some of you are alcoholics and some of you abuse drugs. Some of you engage in road rage and I won't fly on an airplane with any of you.

You need to make a decision on what you want for your lives." Today they are doing much better.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have learned that all of life is relationships. I must value them and nurture them.

I must respect people, I must care about people, I must love people—the easy ones first—it is what makes life worthwhile.

Our love must often be tough love—a high standard for excellence combined with caring and compassion.

Let me ask: what is your relationship with the life around you?

Photo of male lion

I live a courageous life

I believe that if we are to evolve as people and if we are to transform our institutions we must find our courage.

Our search for consensus has often made cowards of all of us.

Courage is not the absence of fear. It is the willingness to do the right thing despite our fear.

When I left the corporate world I was terrified. I asked my coach, "How do I handle the fear?" she said, "You go through it."

I was not a wealthy man. I feared financial failure and what people would think of me if I failed in my grand ideas for my life.

Finally I realized that if I failed no one would remember in a few short years but if I lacked the courage to act on my dreams my God and I would remember it for an eternity.

Since then I use the certainty of my own mortality to cut through the superficial when I make a decision.

Ladies and gentlemen connecting to our dreams and the realization that our time is short is a great source of courage.

Let me ask: what are your dreams?

Photo of loon

I live a compassionate life

At root compassion means, “to be together with someone’s pain.”

Robert Greenleaf, author of *Servant Leadership*, wrote that caring is the essential motive. We must care about our organizations and institutions—they frame our lives.

We are responsible for the mess of our institutions. Greenleaf wrote that the problem is not the evil people, the immature, the lazy, and the selfish. The problem is the “good guys”—people like you and me who have gone to sleep.

We are all guilty. And we are all innocent. Therefore we must be compassionate with one another and with ourselves as we work to make a difference.

And, most importantly, we must widen our circle of compassion to include all living creatures.

Let me ask: do you seek to understand?

Photo of South Dakota badlands

I am the change I want to see in the world

As Gandhi said, be the change we want to see in the world.

I so badly want to change other people. But more and more I realize that I change the world by changing myself. Nothing is more difficult.

I can’t wait for others to act.

I am responsible to the world around me. I am responsible to use my gifts to do what I can do, however small or large.

I am responsible to speak the truth as I know it, to stand up to injustice, to face my own dark side and deal with it.

Here is a suggestion from Dee Hock, founder of Visa:

Make a list of all things done to you that you abhor. Don't do them to others ever. Make another list of things done for you that you loved. Do them for others, always.

I need to ask myself: "What is my contribution to the problems around me?"

Photo of Columbine flower

I rest and renew myself

We grow stronger physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually by exerting ourselves, even exhausting ourselves, and then resting.

My 14 months in the San Juan Mountains was a time of renewal and reflection.

I asked a client if he would take just 15 minutes a day to sit quietly and think. He responded, "What would I think about?" I said, "I am sure you will think of something." We have much to think about. Many of us, me included, just need time to catch up with ourselves.

Let me ask: do you take time to recover?

Photo of Lance Armstrong

Life is difficult

Scott Peck wrote in the first line of his book *The Road Less Traveled* that life is difficult. It is supposed to be that way. Once we accept this truth, life gets easier.

Lance Armstrong, cancer survivor and six time (he recently added his 7th consecutive Tour de France victory) Tour de France winner wrote in his autobiography that he is willing to suffer to be all he can be.

My happiness comes from working to achieve noble goals. My suffering along the way provides meaning.

Let me ask: are you willing to sacrifice to feel alive?

Photo of Grand Teton Mountains

I am more authentic as I fulfill my potential

Each Saint is unique because they have become themselves.

Bob Terry wrote in *Authentic Leadership*:

“Authenticity is speaking, however dimly, to more and more of us, calling us to recognize the pervasiveness of the new inauthenticity. Something is not right...we have an intuitive sense of disconnection from the very institutions and people we believe we should be connected with.”

We have a lot of work to do to become saintly.

We are responsible for our own authenticity. Each of us can have our moment of authenticity. We can say “no” to something harmful to us no matter what someone else may do to us.

You the good people of Ohio Head Start are in an especially challenging time that calls for courage and authenticity.

Let me ask: Do you dare to be the possibility that is you?

I've shared with you some of my philosophy of life. It is a work in progress, as is each of us.

You are people who have the essential motive that Robert Greenleaf wrote about. You care.

Emerson wrote that the world belongs to the energetic. Reenergize yourselves and lead. Take personal responsibility to do what you can to make this a better world.

I salute you for the nobility of your purpose. I know you will find your way in the chaos of today's world.

I would like to conclude with some photos and thought for you to reflect on.

Twenty-two nature and wildlife photos

My dad died recently. Scoop, as we called him, was 90 years old. He still lived independently and was sharp as a tack.

Dad was my model for living and, in the end he also taught me how to die with courage and dignity.

I will forever be inspired by his legacy of a good person.

I hope that you have someone in your life that inspires you to live brave and free and to be the best you can be. And I hope you will be that model of the good person for the children you serve.

Thank you.