

Day 6: LEADERSHIP AND ELDESHIP: AN EMERGING CONSCIOUSNESS
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An Emerging Model: Building Bridges across the Universe with Heart

Leadership in today's dynamic and complex world is undergoing a huge transitional phase. Leaders are being constantly challenged to function successfully in an increasingly diverse, competitive, complex, global context.

Leaders are often culturally identified – they identify with a dominant style, dominant culture and dominant trends – and reflect the identity of the organization or group. They consciously or otherwise tend to identify with the power paradigm. This also happens in part because they get “dreamed up” (pulled by the field to fill in a particular role) by the organization, society, country, or world as “the one who is supposed to have all the power or be “the expert”.

From a process perspective, however, leadership is a role, one among many in an ever changing field. Potentially, it is a fluid role and any member of the group can fill this as a model of “emerging leadership”.

For a leader to be able to acknowledge and promote potential leadership in other members, she has to develop a sense of Deep Democracy. Deep Democracy, a term coined by Arnold Mindell, is a feeling attitude toward life that appreciates all the voices and parts in a given group. It also recognizes the equal importance of consensus reality - everyday reality, the reality we all consent to as being real (facts, issues, problems, people), dreamland figures (roles, ghost roles – experiences talked about yet not represented, feelings) and the essence (common ground) that connects everyone.

A leader embracing Deep Democracy transitions from leadership to eldership. Eldership, according to Arnold and Amy Mindell, is a universal metaskill – a feeling attitude with which one approaches life – arising from one's deepest self and its direction. It involves Deep Democracy and the sense that the world is your child.

An elder is home to all parts of themselves as well as the group. It is a loving presence, an aura that others can sense and feel which creates a welcoming atmosphere and safety. It may arise spontaneously in a comment, a gesture, an experience or feeling attitude or may be a way of “being”. It may arise out of the groups need for innate wisdom.

An elder is someone who sees everyone as her child, conflict and hatred as well as love and harmony. Because she supports all experiences, she is seen as creating an atmosphere of support, awareness, belongingness and community. She helps others to transcend their everyday reality perspective and access their deepest self. Because of her ability to embracing all the levels of experiences, she sees the larger picture, the long term, the eternal and spiritual as well as the momentary and political.

The evolution of leadership into eldership being an awareness evolution is the core Process Work concept that underlies the transition that is happening in the world. We see the leader transforming into the elder, when she is able to access her deepest self and bring in the perspective it gives her. In connecting the relevance of inner and outer work, she is an innate part of the overall process and facilitates the emergence of resolution from her conscious use of her rank and privilege. Essentially she channels the universe and helps to bring the Process Mind, the Buddha mind or God for the benefit of the group and the universe.

In a group process the leader and elder steps forward to give direction, bring consensus, and tap into the dreaming of the group so that the objectives are satisfied. She steps in to bring in the ideas of deep democracy giving space to all points of view and all the voices, as well as all dimensions of experience. Thus she facilitates, framing experiences, keeping an eye on all the different levels of group work (individual work, the relationships between people, the entire group, and the outer systemic and institutional issues), and noticing momentary resolutions.

Inner Work - Connecting to our Sense of Eldership through our Sense of our Deeper Self

1. Think to yourself, what qualities does an elder have?
2. Think of people you consider your elders and people you think of as elders in the world. What qualities do they have?
3. Think of a situation you would have liked to have been able to elder.
4. Describe the situation to yourself and see if you can find the main polarity in that field. Summarize each side in a phrase or two.
5. Think to yourself, what side were you on?
6. Now, stand and move a little bit.
7. Sense your deepest self, whatever that means to you.
8. Where is it located in your body, in the moment? This is an intuitive question; trust your body to tell you where it is.
9. Feel the quality and energy in that area of your body and notice sounds that come from that spot in your body or that go along with that body experience. Make that sound and feel the quality in your body, and ask yourself:
 - a. With what spot on earth do you associate that body experience and sound? This could be a real place where you have been or a spot on earth, in nature that you imagine now.
 - b. When you are ready go there in your imagination. Feel yourself being there. Sense and notice the presence and power of the earth.
 - c. Let this presence and power move you. Let it find its dance through you.
10. From this sense of your deepest self think back to the situation you would have liked to elder and allow yourself to interact in any way that comes to you. Notice your feeling attitude toward each side and the situation as a whole.
11. Think to yourself, in what way, if any, are you different in the situation from the way you were in the past.
12. Recall your sense of your deeper self and notice if this sense emerges during the group process.