

MATRIX COMMUNICATION NETWORKS™

ESSENTIAL SKILLS & PRACTICES

- 1) ***Establish a Matrix of Person-to-Person Communication in the Group***
 - Form the foundation for highly inclusive communication and an open, collaborative system

- 2) ***Cultivate a Ground of Health – A Key to Sustainability & Resilience***
 - Establish connections as ordinary human beings
 - Build a ground of cohesion based on what is simple, enjoyable, satisfying or appreciative; building on strengths and what's going well

- 3) ***Be Conscious of “The Whole” – Track and Be Responsive to the Group or System***
 - Insure inclusion and engagement
 - Track patterns (over time) that limit effectiveness and innovation

Embody Presence: Access the Intelligence of our Bodies, Minds, Hearts and Spirits –

- Grounded in Connection to Source / Collective Intelligence
- Utilize Multiple Intelligences

- ***Establish Appreciative and Differentiating Feedback as a Norm***
 - Redefine feedback as an **investment** in the relationships & our work together
 - Distinguish between **impact and intention**; learn about the impact of our communication and leadership style
 - Understand and practice feedback as the key to **differentiation**: changing or letting go of behaviors, beliefs, practices or structures that do not serve the individuals, relationships, the mission or the Whole

- ***Distribute and Diversify Roles, Perspectives, Leadership and Fields***
 - Gain freedom from limiting or habitual roles that you take on—or, are given
 - Increase your range of personal & leadership behaviors
 - Learn to distribute roles, perspectives, power, leadership and emotional or cultural “fields”
 - Optimize creativity, sustainability and collective intelligence

- ***Engage in Differences – Differ “With” –***
 - Express & Stay in Connection with **differences** as creative, synergistic **resources**

- ***Matrix Group Dialogue Process™***
 - **Urge, Merge, Diverge, Emerge and Converge**
 - **Transforms conflict** into a multi-perspective, multi-stakeholder, emergent collaboration

MATRIX

Derivation

Late Latin: *matrix*, the womb, source, origin,
From *mater*, root for mother & matter.

Definition

- 1) Originally, the womb; the uterus
- 2) That within which, or within and from which, something originates, takes form, or develops

The health of any living system depends on the communication between its parts.

Matrix Definition: Developing the possibility of communication between each pair of people in the “eyes and ears of the whole” (team or group).

- The **interconnected Matrix (Team / System)** functions as a **Leadership Network**—a network of relationships—that
 - Includes all of its members and utilizes its resources fully
 - Creates a system of interconnected, collaborative, coordinated, adaptive, innovative leadership
 - Supports individuals to be wholly and fully themselves
 - Generates a **relational infrastructure**: relationships thrive in an atmosphere of mutuality and openness.
 - Becomes the ground or container that sustains the life of the team over time
 - Builds teams that are enlivened, vital, engaged, creative and satisfying

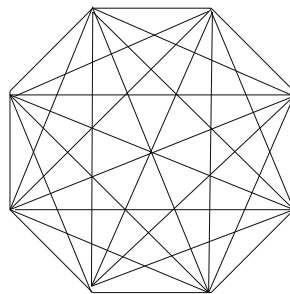


Fig.1

Each line between two points (individuals) represents opening the channel of communication between those 2 individuals. It is 2-way.

In practice: speaking directly to a particular person in the group (vs. habits of speaking to “the group” as a whole or speaking to the leader. **The group becomes “connection-focused”** (vs. exclusively topic or task focused).

In larger contexts, the same principles apply to subgroups within a larger system. Developing a *matrix* between teams or departments within an organization, for example, focuses on strengthening the communication channels between those departments.

Beginning Practice: Opportunity to get to know each other; follow your curiosity

1. Speak **person-to-person** (to a particular person vs. speaking to the whole group)
 - Ask a question of a particular individual
 - Share something about yourself with a particular individual
 - One pair speaking at a time – though communication may go back and forth, include others and become quite fluid and spontaneous
2. Cultivate **ground of health**
 - Get to know each other as fellow ordinary (extraordinary) human beings (outside of work) – e.g., “What lights you up?” “What’s rich and satisfying in your life?”
 - Build work teams on ground of **strengths, what’s going well, appreciations**
3. Be **responsible for the Whole:**
 - **Include all voices** – and over time – **all connections**. Track which pairs have communicated; where the Matrix is filled in and who hasn’t interacted
 - All members are responsible for including as many pairs as possible, i.e., monitor your own communication to leave time for others; include yourself or others who have not yet spoken or connected

GROUND OF HEALTH & RESILIENCE

What is a Ground of Health?

- A foundation of **trust and resilience** in the Matrix of connections to generate **adaptability and sustainability** in teams and organizations
- Taking the time to develop relationships and groups that are “grounded” in what is **positive, inspiring, satisfying or enlivening**; Building teams and starting projects with **strengths, talents, what has gone well** (or is going well); **appreciative feedback**
- Cultivating the lost art of getting to know each other as fellow extraordinary human beings outside of work and at work
 - Who love basketball, horses, cooking or.... What lights you up?

What is NOT Ground of Health:

- Beginning with your deepest struggles, challenges and fears before you know each other and are well-connected
 - No points for “charging in” with your most adamant opinions early on
- OR – starting with your strongest political opinions, religious differences or value judgments which can
 - Generate an atmosphere of threat and cause fragmentation, polarization, traumatic fight-flight responses or highly competitive win-lose dynamics. They are a threat to sustainability, resilience and coherence.
- Asking yes or no questions or questions that may represent a system of oppression, such as, “Are you married? (Not GOH for recently divorced, or gays or lesbians)

Typical Ground of Health Questions or Topics

Outside of Work

What part of your day do you look forward to the most?

Tell me something in your life that lights you up or brings you joy?

You said you have children. I’m wondering if there is a recent magical moment you could share?

I just got back from an amazing vacation. I’d love to share my favorite moment with you.

I am so proud of my teenager right now. Could I share a bit of this story with you?

At Work

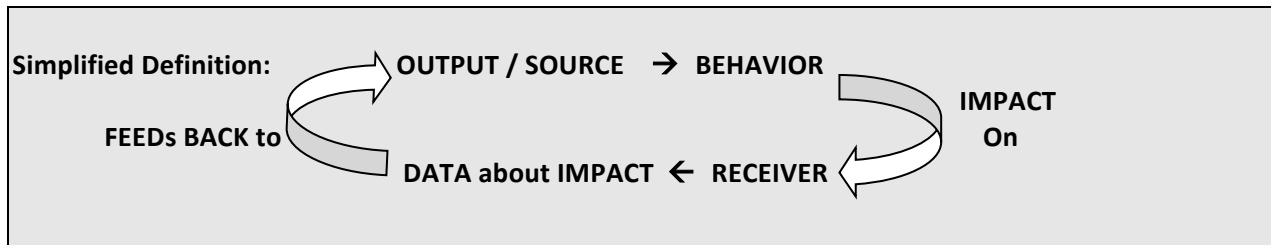
What part of your job is the most rewarding?

Something that I feel proud of about my work on [or with, etc.] is.....

My team did such a great job with this project. The most remarkable part is....

What strengths do you see yourself as bringing to our [or a] team?

FEEDBACK Definitions & Practice



Appreciative Feedback – expresses gratitude; a supportive or expansive impact on the receiver

Differentiating Feedback – expresses an impact that creates a “rub” (friction, challenge) that is often a result of a *difference* in values, cultures, styles, personality or perception
(Commonly called “negative” or “constructive” feedback)

Matrix: Completely Redefines Feedback – from a paradigm of critical /evaluative →

- Feedback is an **Investment** in the relationship, the group & our work or life together
- Feedback = **data** about your **impact** on a particular person
 - Not “the truth” about who you are
 - Not a statement about your **intention**
 - Helps align **intention** with **impact**
 - Without feedback, we cannot know our **impact** on an other person(s)
- Feedback is the **key to differentiation**: changing or releasing behaviors, beliefs, practices and structures that *do not serve the relationships, the work or the Whole*—and going forward together
- Feedback includes **appreciative** (5:1 ratio)
- The most empowering form of feedback is to **ask**.

Other definitions:

- From a systems perspective: the consequence of feedback is to facilitate the **emergence of a “self” or identity**. Ongoing feedback stabilizes its existence.
- In the language of control theory: feedback returns information from a receptive observer to an influence-able system in order to have a beneficial effect.

From a talk given by Jack Spivak, 2000

Basic Matrix Feedback Practice

(When you have a shared learning or practice context)

1. Begin with **appreciative** feedback:

When you do / say X , the impact for me is Y .

2. **Differentiating feedback:** Use the same sentence formula (above) to give feedback about a difference or a challenge—something that is difficult in your interactions, a so-called, “rub.” If applicable add a request that states what you would prefer:

And, I would prefer that you did / said Z .

3. Most proactive: **Ask** for feedback.

When I did / said X , what was the impact for you?

**(X, Y & Z = specific and behavioral)*

The Receiver / Listener’s Response

1. **Reflection:** “reflective or active listening”¹

- “What I hear you saying is....” Or, “I hear that when I did X , the impact for you was Y .”
 - It is common to skip this step and go directly to explaining or defending our *intention*. This essentially dismisses the *feedback about impact*
 - If the speaker (giver) feels heard or understood, this step is complete. If not, the speaker clarifies his or her meaning and the listener (receiver) *reflects* the new understanding

2. **Acknowledgment**

- Goes beyond verbal paraphrasing to let the speaker know that you can *imagine being in her situation* (or “in her shoes”) and can then “get” how she might feel (or respond) this way.
 - It is commonplace to hear *interpretations* and even judgments included in the acknowledgment. “I get that it’s easy for you to be on time and you just assume that’s true for everyone.”
 - With communication training, the receiver’s acknowledgment is often to empathize. “I can understand that you feel frustrated (or hurt or...)” A true acknowledgment goes beyond empathy—although it has an empathetic quality.
 - Try on the other person’s “reality” and speak from that awareness. “I get that you put a lot of effort into preparing for the meeting, and you are always on time. I understand that my being late, regardless of my good reasons, creates

a challenge for you and the whole team. I imagine that it feels like I don't care about the project, the team or you."

- When this acknowledgment is in the ballpark, it tends to relax the tension and open the connection. It is often experienced as healing or as a true reconciliation. Sometimes, it is all that is needed. Other times, a fuller dialogue around the differing needs or perspectives is required to come to a creative, *emergent* solution.

Giving and Receiving Effective Feedback

Giving Feedback	Receiving Feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer feedback about something specific and behavioral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Something changeable • Non-judgmental or neutral tone – not devaluing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calm, kind, respectful • Described and owned as personal experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Data</i> about <i>impact</i> • I – language • Timing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent to event / immediacy • Attends to person's readiness/availability to hear • Choose an appropriate context • Frequency/amount – e.g., Bite-sized • Attitude / Intention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not spoken as a need/agenda for person to change • An offering to promote growth in the relationship – mutually • Non-attachment to results • Direct <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not diluted or excused • Track and check in <=> two-way process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate receptivity//listen with interest • Reflect the essence of what you heard back to the giver/speaker using his/her language. Then acknowledge. • Timing: be proactive – stay in charge of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When and where • How much • From whom • Clarity and understanding • Attitude: orient toward feedback as an offering to enhance relationship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curiosity/interest • Non-defensive / neutral • Don't take one person's feedback as "the truth." • Ask for other people's perceptions • Chew on it and digest it • Most proactive way to receive feedback: Ask for it.

Safeguards in Groups and Relationships

- If you don't have a context to invest, why give feedback?
- Avoid dumping the whole "laundry list": "While I've got the floor, let me tell you everything else that is bothering me."
- When one person opens the door to speak their feedback, avoid taking it as an opportunity to follow suit and add your or allow others' versions.
 - In its worst form, this can be the beginning of scapegoating. Even offering complements and praise can be overwhelming if it all comes at once.
- As the receiver of the feedback, you are in charge of how much, where and when you hear it. You are not the "victim" of the feedback. You get to say when you've heard as much as you can digest or take in.

Benefits

- **Feedback Between Pairs Yields Consciousness of the Whole** -- When we function knowing that we are not *separate*, isolated parts (individuals) but that we are all *connected webs of relationships*,
 - Feedback is *not just for the individuals or pairs* involved. Feedback that applies to one person undoubtedly applies to others.
 - Feedback may represent a *difference* that is being amplified through one pair while other pairs diminish or suppress their differences entirely.
 - Feedback *given in the open* is a window to *data about the entire system* or group and births *collective consciousness and responsibility*
- **Keeps the "Pipes" Clear** – keeps our connections open, current and accessible. This translates to
 - Effective, collaborative working relationships and to harmonious, trusting and loving relationships in all contexts.
 - *Appreciative feedback* generates warmth and resilience. *Differentiating feedback* prevents differences from going underground and blocking or breaking connection.
- **Transparency: Seeing and Being Seen** – Feedback opens the door to deeper dialogue and knowing of each other
 - After hearing and acknowledging the feedback, sharing your intention may deepen the understanding and connection
 - Acknowledging and exploring *projections* or filters that may be affecting either person in the interaction midwifes a juicy both-and understanding and change
 - Having blind spots made visible by skillfully delivered feedback is the fastest path to learning about aspects or patterns of behavior that don't actually serve the individual, relationships, community, team or the work together

Difference! From Threats to Parts of the Whole

This, ultimately, is the essence of integrity: to live, and to lead, in ways that can cope creatively with views of reality other than our own. If our capacity to lead stops at the frontier of difference, our world will become painfully small. If we can cross that frontier and work effectively with those different from us, we can step out of the prison of sameness. We can actually find the freedom to live, and to lead across borders.²

Mark Gerzon

What we need is something new—networks of responsibility drawn from all segments [of society] coming together to create a wholeness that incorporates diversity.³

John Gardner

Principle: Valuing Differences as Essential Resources

- 1. Shift: Either-Or / Win-Lose dichotomies → Both-And / Win-Win Sources of the Intelligence of the Whole**
 - Recognizes polarities (differences) as **both-and** ends of a continuum, rather than either-or, win-loose dichotomies
- 2. Move from Debate → Dialogue: Differ From ← → to Differ With → ←**
 - Transparency:** Express differences in the open and stay *in connection* with those who have a different agenda, perspective or value. **Be Curious!** Engage with wonder and delight.⁴
- 3. Invite the Missing or Non-dominant Voices**
 - Invite differences that are not the dominant expression
- 4. Suspend the need for Resolution or Decision**
 - Let go of the need to be right or prove a point, or to reach agreement
- 5. Value the Creative Tension Between the Differences**
 - Create opportunities to expand and evolve into new possibilities and innovations that are born of the *relationship between the differences*.
- 6. Listen for the Emergent Innovation from *the Voice of the Whole***

This requires a radical differentiation from the paradigm of separateness itself. It is through connection with each (*different*) *other* that we can actually **differentiate** (grow or change) in the evolutionary manner that allows us to **let go of that which does not serve the whole**.

When we are willing to **speak the voice of our truth while listening and being curious about the wisdom of the other**, if we can suspend the need for agreement or resolution, we open a creative dynamic born of the tension between the two.

In Practice: *Engage with Differences ~ “Differ With”*

- This Matrix Essential skill is the doorway to **transforming conflict** and power-over dynamics → to **working with differences as win-win**, collaborative, synergistic, aspects of evolutionary collective intelligence
- Skill that can be applied with your kids, partners, friends and colleagues
- Transforms relationships and culture!
- **Each different perspective = part of the collective intelligence** → Most innovative, creative, adaptive, intelligent decision, direction or solution comes through **bringing differences into connection è synergy / emergence / innovation**

Examples of Common Differences

- Introvert / Extrovert
- Big Picture / Details
- Planner / Spontaneous
- Lead with thinking / lead with emotions
- Visionary / Operational
- Optimist / Pessimist or Skeptic
- Risk Taker / Cautionary
- Confrontational or assertive / Accommodating
- Early Riser / Night Owl
- Internal processor / External Processor

Process: *Differ With* - Pairs

- a) **Identify** an *enlivening* or influential difference.
- b) **Engage & Discover.** Follow your curiosity. “Turn to wonder.”⁵ Seek to discover what makes this “other” person tick.
 - DO ask “curious” questions that invite the speaker to share more details. E.g., “*What is it that you love about getting up early in the morning?*” “*What’s important to you about looking at the practical applications? Sounds like that is really satisfying to you? Tell me more...*” “*You seem to be passionate about riding your bike to work and driving your car less. I’d love to hear more about what that means to you.*”
 - DON’T ask leading questions to prove your own point with a tone of debate or judgment. E.g., “*What can you possibly love about having to wake up early?*” “*Don’t you get incredibly bored constantly thinking about practicalities?*”
- c) **Distribute: Trade Places.** Once both people have asked “curious questions,” trade places. Literally, physically stand or sit in each other’s chair or place.
 - **Share your “authentic version”** of the other’s perspective or nature. E.g., *As a night owl dialoging with a morning person, I take their “place” and search for my authentic version of being a morning person. I realize I get up early to teach yoga during an organizational retreat that I facilitate. In that context I love getting up early, being alert and energized at the start of the sessions. The morning person then stands in my place (the night owl) and reports loving the times when he manages to stay up late and go to a concert. He does like the nightlife scene once in a while.*
- d) **Name the impact of this exploration on your connection with each other**
 - “When I hear this difference in the context of your family situation, *my connection* with you eases considerably. I understand that it’s not about me personally.”

- “I find exploring this difference so energizing and complimentary! The *impact on our connection* is more aliveness and interest.”
- “I must admit that I find your having so many more years of experience than me a little intimidating, so *our connection* feels a little tentative. Once I name that, I notice that the tentativeness changes to feeling privileged to get to learn from you.”

Additional Formats

1. Identify, Name and “Hold” Differences

This most basic practice is like learning the alphabet before you learn words. Introduce simple examples of how to *name differences*. Person-to-person, particular pairs share their awareness of differences that exist between them. In this beginning practice, there is no need for discussion, agreement or resolution. We are cultivating an atmosphere and a set of norms that include just *naming* and *holding differences in connection with each other*. We offer multiple choice sentence stems to seed the conversation.

Naming Differences in Connection

“*I experience you* as a bottom-line numbers guy and myself as a risk-taking adventurer.”

“*I see myself* as someone who always wants to keep things light, and you as someone who wants to stay real and deep.”

“*I imagine the fact that I am* married and have children, whereas *you are* single and don’t have children, generates a *difference* in our priorities at times.”

“*I am* 30 years older than you and am in a very different life stage....”

“*I feel differently* than you about....”

“*I am going to continue to hold a difference* with you in regard to....”

“*I am going to offer a different perspective* just to make sure the students’ feelings are represented.”

Distributing and Differentiating Group Roles, Perspectives & Fields

The Science: Definitions

We are *distributing*—and *differentiating from*—habitual *roles*, *perspectives* and emotional (or cultural) *fields*. The same principle applies to any “part” being expressed or performed by an individual (or pair or subgroup) on behalf of the Whole.

Role: A *part* or a *function* that is performed by an individual (or subgroup) *for the group*.

Perspective: A particular *point of view*, value or *voice* that is expressed or held *for the group*.

Emotional Field: An *amplified feeling* about someone or something that is expressed or felt *on behalf of the group*.

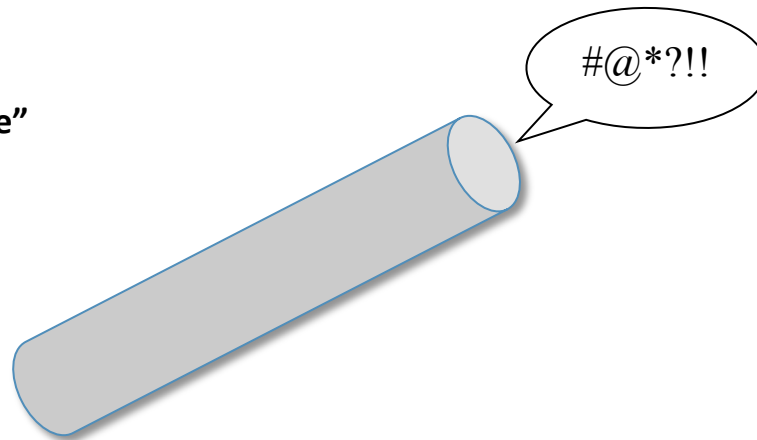
Distribute: To *spread out* something being expressed by one individual (pair or subgroup) through more individuals, pairs or subgroups—through more “pipes” or channels of connection in the Matrix

Differentiate: To engage in or express a role, perspective or feeling that is *different from* one’s habitual expression; to disengage or inhibit the expression of the typical role, perspective or feeling.

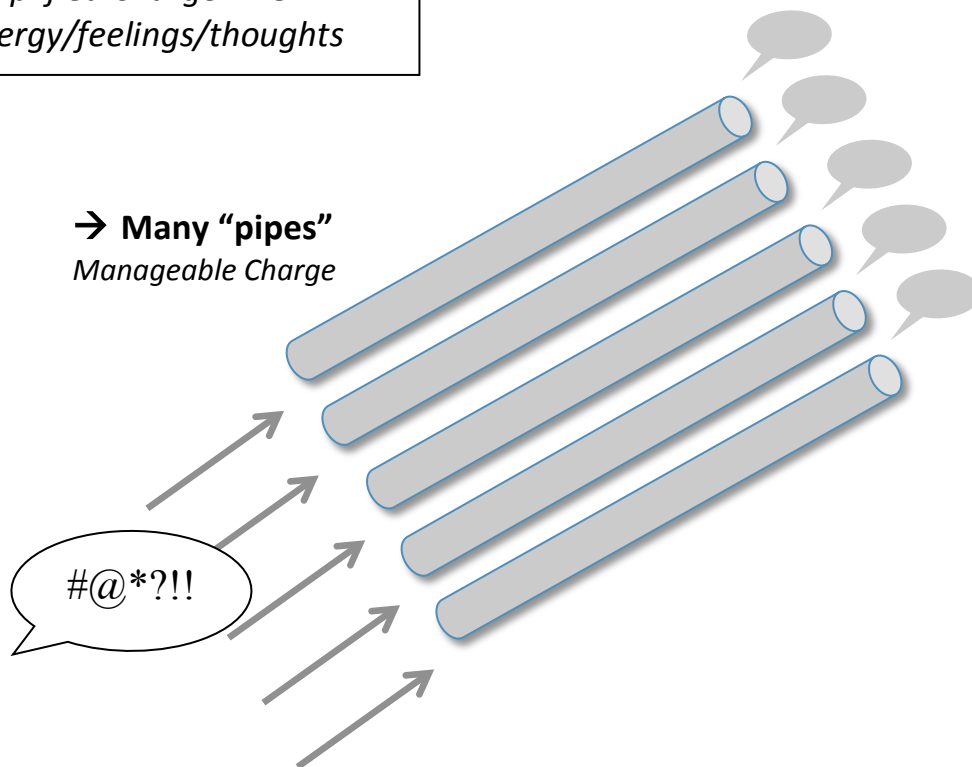
- Each pair of people represents the *capacity for communication* and connection between → a potential *conduit* for the expression of certain roles, voices, perspectives, energies, needs or emotions that are a part of the *group field*
- If there is only one conduit available for a particular role, perspective or field → it may be *amplified* (intensified) for the person or pair performing that role
 - E.g., if there is only one pair doing the *differentiation* for the group, it will be *amplified* into a more highly charged or polarized “fight” or conflict
- Imagine that you have a room (or container) with a fixed volume of water or air in it. If that water or air has only one pipe to flow through, the water or air pressure will be high. If that same volume is *distributed* through more pipes the pressure or charge through each pipe is reduced.

DISTRIBUTION

From one “pipe”



*Amplified Charge: BIG
energy/feelings/thoughts*



→ **Many “pipes”**
Manageable Charge

- An **individual** *differentiates* from a typical or habitual role, perspective or field by *engaging in or expressing one that is different—or inhibiting one that is habitual*
 - Develop increased choice and range of behavior
 - Access possibility of *staying in connection with differences*—multiple perspectives, feelings or agendas—through times of chaos or reorganization
- At the **group or systems level**, this practice
 - Radically redefines our entire understanding of conflict

- Changes how we work with trauma or distress in groups by reducing the *amplified field* that runs through any one person or subgroup
- Greatly increases the collaboration, collective intelligence and creativity available to the group
- Supports resilience and sustainability of the group over time.
- Completely disassembles the paradigm of separateness and *awakens us to the reality of our interconnection.*
- Is the great pattern breaker and systems' opener
- Is the royal road to change and innovation

Dismantling the Assumption of Separateness

Someone whose character has them being the “needy one” in a group is likely to receive caretaking, problem-solving advice or avoidance. Each of these responses assumes that the issue or problem is with the individual “needy one.” Through a Matrix lens, we would instead begin to ask, “Who else has a version of unmet need?” Who might be completely suppressing the existence of needs and letting this person express the disowned neediness for him and for the group? When the group begins to function as a true Matrix, *distributing the role or field* with others *taking their part* of this energy or *field*, the “needy” person typically feels much more satisfied and connected.

In Practice: *Differentiating* from Habitual Group Roles

For many people, one of the great mysteries and sources of distress about being in a group, is that they find themselves continually replaying the same patterns with the same results—regardless of how much self-awareness they have accumulated.

Matrix Practice: *Differentiating* from Habitual Group Roles

- 1) Identify the *roles* that particular individuals are providing or fulfilling in the group.
- 2) Engage in or express a role that is *different* from your typical one—or—*inhibit* the impulse to play your habitual roles.
- 3) *Take your part of*—or express *your version* of—roles, perspectives or feelings that others typically express for the group or Whole. (This is *distributing*.)

Once the practice of *differentiating* from habitual roles has entered the group culture, it paves the way for an almost unbelievable context for personal change and development. For an actor who has always been cast as a sidekick comic, it would be akin to the liberation that occurs when he is given the opportunity to stretch into a serious dramatic role.

In Practice: *Distributing* Roles, Perspectives or Fields

Differentiating and *distributing* go hand-in-hand. The practice of *distributing roles* through the group is essentially *differentiating* applied to the group as a whole. If only one person (or pair) is providing a function, or expressing a particular emotion or viewpoint, the group's capacity to express its full intelligence is limited. Creativity is diminished and ongoing satisfaction and sustainability become challenging. It is at the heart of shifting from assumptions of working with polarized conflict to a paradigm of harvesting *differences as resources*. It prevents scapegoating and fragmenting. The impact of *distributing roles* is one of the central requirements for realizing an open, emergent and integral system in any group. It is the road home.

Note: All of the information about *group roles* can be applied to *perspectives* and *emotional fields*. Roles are not entirely distinct from the perspectives, feelings or issues that they express.

- A *role* can also be a function that a team provides for the department, or a department provides for the organization or a nation provides for the world.
- Roles may also seem to be *taken on* by someone or *given* or *ascribed* to someone or some part.

Types of Roles and How They Develop

- “Born into”: e.g., oldest child, first-born son, the tall kid, the Jewish boy, the blonde girl or the different one
 - Have familial, ethnic and social-cultural attributes ascribed to them
 - Some attributes reflect systems of prejudice and oppression & stereotypes: e.g., the dumb blonde, the intimidating giant, the rich Jew, the criminal / exotic African-American
- Biographical, shaped by life experiences: circumstances of birth, family, school groups, accidents, etc.
- Having a genetic, physiological or psychosocial predisposition to provide a role that is not being fulfilled for a system
 - E.g., a sick child may become the “weak one” providing the vulnerability for the family system; the “rebel” may be challenging the status quo or differentiating for the group
- Can be the act of carrying a particular voice, point of view, energy, need or archetype for the group or larger whole
 - A function that a team provides for the department, or a department provides for the organization or a nation provides for the world.
- May seem to be “taken on,” or ascribed to someone else
- Reflect strengths and strategies available to us for navigating the complex terrain of social environments throughout our life

Typical Group Roles

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<i>The Observer/Witness</i>	<i>The Initiator</i>
<i>The Rebel</i>	<i>The Conformist</i>
<i>The Jester</i>	<i>The Serious One</i>
<i>The Conflict Pair</i>	<i>The Mediator</i>
<i>The Emotional Conduit</i>	<i>The Stabilizer</i>
<i>The Focuser</i>	<i>The Diffuser or Distracter</i>
<i>The Gatekeeper</i>	<i>The Dominator</i>
<i>The Threatened or Unsafe One</i>	<i>The Calm, Collected One</i>
<i>The Traumatized One</i>	<i>The Healer</i>
<i>The Needy One</i>	<i>The Caretaker</i>
<i>The Star/Center Stage</i>	<i>The Support Person</i>
<i>The Scapegoat / Target</i>	<i>The Innocent /Golden One</i>
<i>The Flirt/Charmer</i>	<i>The Nerd / Brain</i>
<i>The Optimist</i>	<i>The Pessimist</i>

E.g., the mediator – reconciles conflicts, the clown – keeps the tone light, the conflict pair – does the differing / differentiating or “pushing” for the group, the observer – sees the big picture and creates space for others, the emotional conduit – expresses feelings for the group.

Managing, Facilitating & Participating In Times of Evolutionary Change⁶

Collective Leadership of Emergent Systems From Leadership by One –to—Leadership by Many (All)

Emergence – The arising of “higher level,” novel and coherent structures, patterns, processes, properties, dynamics and laws during the process of *self-organization* in complex systems; arising from *the interactions of the components* (agents) [or individuals] that make up the system itself.⁷ [Emphasis mine]

- From mechanistic models of linear cause and effect; sole experts; predict & control
- To Matrix (systems) models of interconnection, differentiation and collective, emergent leadership

It is through establishing a living, breathing Matrix of relationships with optimal communication, feedback and diversity that we shape groups toward their true capacity as *living systems*. Living systems are adaptive, innovative and sustainable through periods of chaos and change. They function with—and in human terms, are guided by—the web-like pattern of connections between the individuals, *and by their connection to a larger Collective Intelligence emerging*.

System

- Each part does something special, the parts influence each other and the sum of the parts make a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts.

[A] *system of influence* possesses qualities and capacities that were unknown in the individuals. It isn't that they were hidden; they simply don't exist until the system emerges. They are properties of the system, not the individual, but once there, individuals possess them. And the system that emerges always possesses greater power and influence than is possible through planned, incremental change. *Emergence* is how Life creates radical change and takes things to scale.

(Meg Wheatly, Ph.D., The Berkana Institute)

Optimize the System:

- **Person-to-Person** – open communication channels in the “eyes and ears” of the group
- **Ground of Health** – build trust = **social / relational capital; resilience**
- **Feedback** – invest in relationships; optimize ability to sustain work together and to change what doesn't serve*
- **Diversify & Distribute Roles, Perspectives, Leadership & Fields** – liberate system and individuals from limiting, habitual roles and perspectives; maximize creativity
- **Differentiate**** – include many *different* voices/versions in a group dialogue; access wisdom of the whole

Outcomes: Characteristics of the Culture

Inclusive	Authentic	Trusting	Resilient
Responsive	Stable	Innovative	Diverse

Guidelines for Collective Leadership or Living Systems (Or, *complex adaptive systems*)

1. Create a Coordinated Whole: Establish and Maintain a Matrix Leadership Network

All of our beginning Matrix Essential principles come into play here. When we establish a Matrix of *person-to-person communication* that includes a *ground of health* that builds *trust, resonance and resilience*, we create the capacity for being synchronized or entrained with each other and the Whole. This is enhanced when we connect through the limbic systems of our *heart-brain-bodies* as well as our minds. It is dependent upon our ability to *track and take responsibility for the Whole* (initially, inclusion). With a well-functioning Matrix as the foundation, groups will have an enhanced capacity to harvest synergistic, collective intelligence and cooperative action that is on behalf of the Whole.

2. Create a High Feedback Culture – Generate Multiple Feedback Loops

In order to keep the “pipes clear” between members of a team or group, feedback must become a norm. If the parts of any system are to work together effectively over time, feedback is essential. Feedback is a control mechanism that is not hierarchical, top-down or evaluative. With adequate feedback between the parts of the system, the system itself receives feedback about how it is functioning. It can self-regulate, self-organize and be self-sustaining. Creating a culture in which feedback is valued as an *investment in relationships*, as an investment in learning, and as essential to the *collective intelligence*, generates the most evolutionary, innovative and adaptive development over time.

3. Support Differentiation: Invite Difference; Delay Solution or Resolution

Hold space for as many differences, expressed through as many pairs of people as is possible in a given context. Savor the creative tension between these differences as the *voice of emergent creativity*. Initially, do not attempt to resolve, mediate or reach a compromise between any two opposing points of view. Optimize the communication between the parts and maximize the *differentiation from old forms* that will no longer serve the group. Relish the world of paradox.

In the inspiring words of Joseph Bronowski, “*The progress of science is the discovery at each step of a new order which gives unity to what had seemed unlike.*” Leaders who think in terms of *collective emergence* are listening for the new order—new understanding, idea or structure—that “gives unity to what had seemed unlike.” In Matrix language, staying in connection through the differences brings us to what will re-form us.

a. Widen perspective, question assumptions, listen for emergent synthesis

In order to invite difference we must widen our perspective. We must be willing to walk a mile in someone else's shoes. It must become more important to understand someone else's point of view than to prove the wisdom of our own. We must know that we don't know what is best or what is needed. Our own consciousness must be rooted in the fact that we are only seeing from one possible perspective.

Matrix leaders must be rooted in the stance that the wisdom to know what will work best *will only come from the synchronistic interactions of all of the individuals*. Mistaking a particular issue, problem or perspective as *the* terrain to travel will fragment or drain the life out of any group over time. The failure to see the *big picture* that comes through the interactions between the parts will result in a kind of "spatial blindness."⁸ Analyzing *a part* separate from the whole causes us to lose perspective and miss the overarching context in which these seemingly isolated parts are responding. If we do not work to keep the divergent and unique parts communicating and interacting, we are in danger of suppressing the synchronicity and collaboration.

b. **Avoid polarization or fragmentation**

When a group has fallen into an "us vs. them" mentality, it has undoubtedly landed in behaviors that greatly reduce the intelligence, creativity and coherence of the system. It has fallen into the dominant culture, "win-lose" paradigm. Some will be satisfied and others will be dissatisfied. Some will get their needs met, others will not. Some will feel ownership of the direction of the group, others will feel less engaged or devalued.

Shift your mindset and emotional response from one of threat to one of opportunity. Holding space for creative tension is one of the wellsprings of *emergence*. For leaders, this also means getting out of the mindset of evaluating the merits of one idea versus another. It means learning to listen through an additive rather than subtractive channel. We must shift from measuring the relative merit of one idea against another to tracking the creative *interplay between* the two (or three or more).

4. Distribute roles, perspectives & fields

Watch for fixed perspectives or roles that seemingly collide or habitually move into debate or suppression of differences. Look for opportunities to ask members of a discussion to *differentiate* from their perspective or role and try on another. When is there a missing perspective or voice? When a perspective or an emotional field is highly charged or pervasive, think about *distributing*. Cultivating flexible roles and perspectives generates increased *collective intelligence* in part because the versions of difference that are interacting increase considerably.

5. Track the Process: Patterns, Organizing Fields, Impact and Emergence

In Goldoff's symposium on applying chaos theory to management, she summarized foundational organizational theorists who were writing from as early as 1938, 1957 and prolifically in the 90's.

[They] all emphasize **process over structure** as the best way to visualize the complex organization. [They] all emphasize **communication as the key to organizational survival and dynamic reaction to change rather than successful**

control and rational efficiency as the ultimate *raison d'être* and yardstick for success of modern public management.⁹

Leaders need to learn to give at least equal value to *how* the interactions are occurring as they do to the content and the results. When we begin to pay attention to *who* is interacting with whom, whose ideas get supported, whose voice is typically missing or dominant and what differences are suppressed, we are attending to *process*. Who speaks most frequently or least often? What is the level of engagement in—or the emotional tone of—a meeting? Who makes the decisions? Who really has influence and how? Does that influence come through allying with some to “win” over others who represent a difference? Who pushes for change? Who holds the voice of preserving the status quo? How are women, people of color or gay individuals treated? How are decisions implemented or dropped?

a. Patterns as data

In any group context, watching a group’s process distills down to noticing communication *patterns*. A one-time event is not a pattern. It becomes a pattern when it happens three or more times. Patterns emerge over time, when they occur repetitively. Which pair typically expresses the conflict for the group? Which two people will no longer work together? Who always supports the boss? Who habitually overrides others opinions? When Sam starts most discussions, when Susan typically follows him by supporting his ideas and Jim stays disengaged looking at his watch frequently, we are observing patterns.

b. Recognize organizing fields

Some patterns relate to *group fields*. When I am listening for a *pattern in the field* of a group, I may begin to notice that many separate comments have a common theme. There may be an element of not wanting to do anything risky. I begin to sense that we are in a *field* of threat. As a facilitator I begin to ask myself, “Why would this field of fearing risk be coming up now, at this particular juncture in the group’s life?” I am less interested in resolving or responding directly to reduce or mediate the challenge. I am more interested in identifying the *habitual field* that is organizing these interactions. For example, in a *field* of threat or risk, I get curious about what the perceived risk or fear is for the individuals or the company? If the company is realizing lower profit margins or anticipating layoffs, team members may be thinking and acting much more conservatively than the context requires. Tracking fields requires *mapping associations* rather than conclusions. *Fields* represent a gestalt or bigger picture that becomes clear only by tracking the mysterious emergence of seemingly unrelated puzzle pieces that are turned over a few at a time.

c. Track and take responsibility for impact

Matrix leaders become exquisite *trackers of impact*. Just as someone in the wilderness might track an animal by following the imprint of its foot on the earth, a leader must learn to track the impact of actions and interactions on the *whole* over time. For leaders in any organization or community, this translates to tracking the impact on the team, the company or the local community. This might include tracking the impact of the local economy on the relationships and work of a given department. We might notice and attend to the threat that

occurs with a new director whose style is very different than the previous director's. We could notice the subtle erosion that occurs when two people in the department won't speak to each other because of unresolved differences. We can only assess impact through actively listening to the divergent perspectives and constantly seeking and supporting a high feedback culture.

d. Listen for emergent voice of the Whole speaking

Be a shepherd who follows the intelligence of the flock. As leaders become more attuned to witnessing the *process of the group in phases of chaos* as the system attempts to self-organize, adapt and evolve, they learn to track the *patterns of emergence*. Tracking the synergistic ideas that seem to "pop" (by staying with the interactions between divergent points of view) may support an enhanced visionary capacity to see where the organization seems to be heading. A manager begins to follow and shepherd the organization's own emergent wisdom.

6. Support a Shift in Consciousness

a. Slow down

When animals hibernate during the cold winter temperatures, their metabolism slows way down into a remarkably stable, efficient state. There is very little motion or change. One twenty-four period is indistinguishable from the last. There is very little if any chaos and certainly no change or innovation. They are cast into an efficient form that serves them through the winter months when food is hard to find.

Rupert Sheldrake utilizes this understanding of cooling to illustrate how *form emerges out of chaos*. Water at low temperatures is frozen into the solid form of ice—a complex and "highly ordered arrangement of atoms and molecules."¹⁰ When it is heated the molecules gradually become more kinetic, melting into water—a less ordered, complex array of molecules. Then at even higher temperatures the molecules are boiling chaotically as they transform into gaseous steam molecules. At higher temperatures, speed increases, as does chaos. *In order to come into more complex and stable forms, things must literally slow down by cooling to lower temperatures.*

In traditional kinetic theory, lowering temperature gives less random kinetic motion of particles; there is less chaos and an increase in complexity of form as the cooling process takes place. ...You get a progressive increase in complexity of form as you lower the temperature.¹¹

It is common wisdom that when tempers are flaring and arguments heated, we need to slow down, take a breath and listen from a less heated or chaotic place. When chaos is heightened due to a threat from the external environment or from a change mandated by new direction, slow down. Step back, take a breath, take a walk or come back to it tomorrow or next week.

I often notice that in meetings—whether a design session or a business strategy meeting—as the time pressure increases, speed increases as does the chaos. To a point it is creative. Then there is a point when I often experience team members are not able to track or listen or even think clearly. Imagine someone saying, "Let's slow down. Let's stop talking for two minutes or take a walk and continue to talk out under the open sky." It's as if by doing so,

teams would allow things to cool and slow down enough to reorganize in their own right. Often the direction will become clear just by slowing down.

b. Global perspective – long-term time frame

We learn to avoid what system's theorists call, "temporal blindness."¹² We are not only attending to the immediate impact (gratification or profit), but also to the impact on the next seven generations. To avoid temporal blindness and track impact on the grand scale over time, leaders need to listen through the lens of at least three "realities" on the continuum of time.

First, **honor the past**. Listen for the wisdom of the values in the lineage that need to be acknowledged or celebrated. How can the wisdom of the past in-form the present and the future? What values or practices from the past could support the transformation that is occurring in the present? What parts of the past need to be acknowledged and released in order to serve the current times?

Second, **consider future possibilities**. Utilize current information and assessment of impact to project desired innovations into the future. Predict the possible forks in the road, the new market influences, the future trends in the workforce; then know that you don't know. Align with the vision and mission and keep *re-evaluating the impact of current efforts* (as opposed to the intention).

Then, **listen for the emergent Whole in the present**. Through the ongoing dialogue between the wisdom of the past and the innovations of the future, listen for the *both-and* that is larger than the sum of the parts. Listen for the synergistic ideas that are magically born of the alchemy between multiple divergent perspectives.

c. Let Go of Control ~ Learn to Surf the Chaos ~ Be Comfortable with Not Knowing

Be willing to leave what is comfortable and known. Recognize anxiety as a symptom of threat to the status quo or the known, and reframe it as a signal to loosen your grip and trust. Trust the Matrix. Trust the capacity for the group to communicate and self-organize. Reframe anxiety as the opportunity that heralds creativity and change.

Bud McClure in *Putting a New Spin on Groups: The Science of Chaos*, states unequivocally that groups do not realize their full potential except through second order change, which requires leaving what is comfortable and riding the wave of chaos to support the reorganization. It requires "building emotional strength, endurance and flexibility in handling emotions in chaotic situations."¹³ Like the story of my colleague learning to surf earlier, he could not master or control the waves, he had to learn to let go, smile and let the wave carry him through its turbulent washing machine.

7. Utilize Dimensionality and Complexity

Rather than control an organization, a leader is asked to recognize the multi-dimensionality of a *complex adaptive system* as an asset. We can train people and systems into utilizing the complexity. For example singers and actors can be trained to utilize the kinesthetic, energetic sphere of space around them to optimize their voice quality and projection. We can train athletes and cellists to be more responsive to the other team or orchestra members.

In Matrix teams and organizations this might translate to creating a culture of flexible, interchangeable roles to generate resilience that is infinitely more adaptable and sustainable

than a culture in which roles are rigidly held. Training people to communicate effectively and openly in addition to their task performance, supports utilization of feedback and differences as crucial to *adaptive collective intelligence*. As Matrix trainer and bioengineer, Jack Spivak said in clarifying this principle for me, “If we know that embracing differences will take us into a regime shift, we can practice that until we are the gold medal winners.”¹⁴

¹ Rogers, Carl. (1951). *Client-centered Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications and Theory*. London: Constable.

² Gerzon, Mark, *Leaders Beyond Borders*, by Mark Gerzon, Boulder, CO, 2003, p. 51. Republished as *Leading Through Conflict*, Harvard Business Press, 2006.

³ Gardner, John W. as quoted in Gerzon, Mark, *ibid*.

⁴ Williamson, Penny, relayed to the author in personal conversation, taken from the work of Parker Palmer.

⁶ Knowlan, Amina, Excerpt from *Matrix Leadership*, unpublished manuscript, expected publication 2017.

⁷ Goldstein, Jeffrey, *ibid*

⁸ <http://iit.ches.ua.edu/systems/chaos.html> (May 15, 2007)

⁹ Goldoff, Anna C., Symposium Editor, <http://www.pamij.com/goldoff.html>, quoting Shaffritz and Ott. Symposium on Chaos Theory and Management, May 17, 2007

¹⁰ Sheldrake, Rupert, McKenna, Terrence and Abraham, Ralph, Park Street Press, Rochester, Vermont, 2001, p. 25

¹¹ *Ibid*.

¹² *Ibid*, iit.ches.ua.edu.

¹³ McClure, Bud A. *Putting a New Spin on Groups : The Science of Chaos*, Mahwah, NJ, USA: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Incorporated, 2004. p. 107.

¹⁴ Spivak, Jack, Matrix Leadership Senior Trainer, personal conversation with the author, 2008.