

Possibility

... a state of mind

transforming yourself

transforms your world

JOHN A. WOOD

POSSIBILITY

*Beyond our frozen fears and imagined needs lies another realm,
a realm unrivalled.*

*Beyond our beliefs, opinions and judgements is another state,
a state of wisdom and common sense.*

*Beyond acceptance and tolerance is another world,
a world of love and understanding.*

*There, an all-embracing warmth melts the edges of division,
dissolving the illusion of you and me, of them and us.*

*This internal, eternal universe is home, is love,
is life unbridled – the realm of Possibility.*

For more on Possibility,

please visit therealmofpossibility.org.au

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FOREWORD

You are holding a book of immense value, one that has the potential to change your life. To gain everything, you first must surrender nothing. Most of us live our lives as though trading everything for nothing is a bad deal. We have confused what is ‘everything’ and what is ‘nothing’.

To our ego, ‘everything’ is finding its version of peace and happiness while maintaining its core belief, the belief it is separate from everyone and everything. Our ego’s ‘everything’ is really ‘nothing’. What John Wood calls Possibility is the source of infinite Wisdom and Love.

Our belief in separation is mistaken. We are never separate, even if it seems otherwise; Wisdom and Love are here in this moment. You are holding this book because you are willing to consider the truth of Possibility.

The false belief that we are separate from Possibility leads us to behave as the doer who must overcome the problems in the world. A false belief is ‘nothing’. What we must overcome is our sense of being the doer.

John points us to an innate power that resides in each of us: ‘fresh Thought and Possibility’. To be the beneficiary of fresh Thought and Possibility, we need not add anything; instead, we need a little willingness to be aware of our internally created barriers to Possibility. If we are willing, the rewards are great. When we open ourselves to Possibility, as John writes, ‘the universal power of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense flows through us to guide our daily lives’.

You probably have given a great deal of consideration to the larger questions of life. How can I lead a meaningful life? What is my purpose? What is the source of my happiness? What is the source of my anxiety and fear? How can I live from my highest values? Your search for answers to these questions may have led you to this book.

Please take a moment, though, to consider this smaller question: How am I living my life today? The hundreds of everyday decisions you make today shape your life, not only today but tomorrow, too. Are you heading in the right direction?

Developing a philosophy of life is likely important to you. Yet consider for a moment what John learned from one of his mentors, Dr George Pransky. Dr Pransky’s questioning led John to a big realisation: ‘I saw how deluded I was about how I was in the world. I was not how I “believed myself to be”. I was how I “behaved”.’ John shares, ‘What we say our philosophy is, is not what it is. How we actually live our life is our philosophy.’

Who among us lives in complete congruence with their stated values? If, like me, there are gaps between knowing and doing, you will probably benefit immensely by reading this book.

If you don't want your delusions and illusions to be exposed, stop reading *Possibility* now.

Why is there a gap between knowing and doing? For most of us, it is not down to a lack of effort. We have read books that tell us the four ways to be a better listener, eight ways to be a better parent, ten ways to be a better leader, and fifteen ways to make this year your best year ever ... Yet, our knowing—doing gap persists, and we continue to suffer.

Could it be that, in our effort to close the gap, the beliefs we cherish and the implicit assumptions we make are just wrong? After all, if you were to strap wings and feathers on to your arms and jump off a cliff, the results would be catastrophic. Yet, day after day we strap on our metaphorical wings and feathers, expecting to fly. Next time, we reason, we will fly. The allure of familiar, easy answers is understandable; but easy answers, as most of us have seen, ultimately get us nowhere. When we see that our beliefs and assumptions are wrong, we are ready for another way.

Steven Harrison, in his book *Doing Nothing*, tells this tale:

A man boarded a train for Delhi and sat across from the swami.

The swami was uttering all sorts of incantations and taking dust from a bag and throwing it into the air.

Unable to suppress his curiosity, the man finally asked the swami what he was doing. 'I am protecting this railcar from tigers with my special tiger dust,' replied the swami. 'But,' the man protested, 'there aren't any tigers within thousand miles of us!' And the swami said, 'Effective, isn't it?'

Harrison is making a universal point about just how consistent our belief systems seem to each of us, even when our beliefs are false. Since most days go reasonably well, like the swami, we believe our tiger dust is working.

You can't change a false belief until you notice it. What 'tiger dust' of yours is keeping you from Possibility?

How many ways do you deploy tiger dust each day in an attempt to get more of what you think will make you happy, and less of what you think will make you unhappy? Most of us are unaware of the many forms that tiger dust takes in our lives.

Believing that our capacity to analyse our circumstances will lead to meaningful change is one form of tiger dust. How else, we reason, will we know what we need more of and what we need less of? Relying on our analysis of circumstances, we create many should haves, would haves, and could haves.

Then there are our grievances and our judgments. What form of tiger dust are we deploying when we hold on to a grievance or a judgment as if it were a treasure? What purpose is served by holding on to any grievance or judgment? Could treasured grievances and judgments be keeping us from Possibility?

Habitual thought patterns play repeatedly in our minds to confirm what we believe is our identity. Nonsensical fragmentary thoughts fill the quiet moments.

‘Fresh Thought and Possibility’ rush in any time we create space in our mind. So why we are filling the space with the tiger dust of stale beliefs?

If you think you know what your real problem is, you’re mistaken. If you think Possibility is a genie you can deploy on demand to fix the problem as you have defined it, buy another book.

What if our only real problem is that we have kept Possibility away?

Do we build barriers to keep Possibility away? Why would we do such a foolish thing? Perhaps we don’t want to let go of our problems, held in place by our mistaken beliefs. As long as we do not let go, John observes, we ‘face a future that will closely resemble our past’.

Over and over, life’s journey offers us opportunities to trade nothing to get everything. The American Hall of Fame baseball player, Yogi Berra, was famous for his aphorisms, which had an unintended Zen-like quality. Yogi once said, ‘When you come to the fork in the road, take it.’ The landmark book, *A Course in Miracles*, advises about such forks:

When you come to the place where the branch in the road is quite apparent, you cannot go ahead. You must go either one way or the other. For now, if you go straight ahead, the way you went before you reached the branch, you will go nowhere. The whole purpose of coming this far was to decide which branch you will take now. The way you came no longer matters. It can no longer serve.

Then, *A Course in Miracles* adds these words of comfort and caution: ‘No one who reaches this far can make the wrong decision, although he can delay. And there is no part of the journey that seems more hopeless and futile than standing where the road branches, and not deciding on which way to go.’

The initial steps on the new fork can seem difficult, but the reward is great. In exchange for nothing—your tired beliefs—you will receive everything, Possibility.

Possibility is a guide offered to you by a fellow pilgrim on life’s journey. John’s goal in sharing his experiences with you is not to give you a false sense of superiority because you have learned spiritual lessons. His goal is to uproot your sense of self that keeps you from the real opportunity for meaningful change in your life.

I wish you a rewarding journey—a journey that is really without distance, because it is all within the mind.

Barry Brownstein, Ph.D., is the author of *The Inner-Work of Leadership* and a professor emeritus of economics and leadership at the University of Baltimore

DEDICATION

*To Ronnie – my wife, best mate, confidante, mentor, love of my life and fellow traveller in
‘Life and The Game of Living’ – I dedicate this work, which she,
more than any other, has influenced.*

PREFACE

*'For nothing worth proving can be proven,
nor yet disproven ...'*

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

You may find this guide an arduous read and toss it aside. What I share may cause confusion, possibly disdain or, if one is familiar with the concepts, it may even draw derision. However, I recommend that you read it. If you read it (especially if you read it twice), I can assure you that you will be rewarded. You will gain (maybe for some, for the first time) *insight* into the human condition – the way you and I function at our best and at our worst. I suspect you will be surprised and glad you put in the time and effort to embrace the direction it's pointing towards.

WHY CAN IT BE DIFFICULT TO READ?

The early sections may be challenging to understand for readers unfamiliar with the source of 'Possibility'. But as you read on, the meaning will become clearer. For others, it will fly in the face of entrenched beliefs.

Another block might be that I draw heavily on examples from business and organisation. If you are not familiar with or have a distaste for that arena, what I say may not seem relevant to you and your life.

Then there's the repetition. Key points are mentioned a few times. Why do I do that? At the heart of this material are the findings that we human beings don't read or hear what the writer or speaker 'means'. We attribute our own 'meaning' to what we read (or hear) based on what we already have in our memory (our conditioning).

As we read, we think we know what he or she means. We read as if the author is writing about the same, similar or related ideas to what we already know and believe we understand. Because of this human habit, we mostly miss the author's meaning as we try and squeeze their meaning into our existing reality.

I do my best to cut through that mental barrier by coming at the central point from many angles. Probably too many! But then again, this is a guide designed to point you in the direction of your liberation, creativity and peace of mind.

Finally, I am using language to convey the inexpressible – the freedom and power of Possibility, a state of awareness that has to be experienced to be understood.

My aspiration is that, as you read, you may be reminded of times when you experienced Possibility, recognising how that state differs from impossibility; and you may be inspired to keep exploring that transcendent state of awareness for your benefit and the benefit of the common good.

INTRODUCTION

With my mind already occupied by belief, opinion, judgement and knowledge, I do not see people as they are; I see them as I remember them to be.

This guide holds the potential to be the catalyst for a new life – an endless series of fresh, liberating realities.

My intention is that you will be encouraged to take your own journey of deepening, or maybe re-discovering, your innate transformative state – your own state of Possibility.

So as we release ourselves from the limitation of habits, our adherence to mindsets and the censure of our lifelong conditioning, Possibility is *seen* and transforms our world.

We can then continue to renew as we recognise how we miss seeing Possibility and remind ourselves how we might see it again through a mind emancipated from our lifelong ‘story’. This story that had us padlocked to our past.

In *seeing* Possibility, we transform the relationships we have – beginning with the one we have with our self and as a consequence with all those we have with others (even the seemingly intractable ones). And perhaps the most wonderful of them all is our relationship with nature – the miraculous world we have been born into.

Seeing Possibility is the superhighway down which we travel when manifesting any original idea *seen* in our mind’s eye. It may be a work of art, a new invention or business venture, a new piece of software or a transformed life and relationship.

As we awaken to the deeper reality of Possibility, sparks ignite and grow to an indomitable force from which there is no turning back. In a state of Possibility we inhabit and influence a new world. One *seen* each time as if for the first time.

At the end of the book, I’ll introduce you to the not-for-profit Possibility Workshop, an idea born in 2010 during a retreat in the Amazon jungle. It was there that my existing relationship with Possibility blossomed. More than on any other encounter, I *saw* that a transformed future is available to every human being.

And so, may this happen for you too!

CAVEAT LECTOR

(Let the Reader Beware)

'It is pure illusion to think that an opinion that passes down from century to century, from generation to generation, may not be entirely false.'

Pierre Bayle

Story, fable, myth and metaphor can be created to encourage kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense. Stories are also used to elicit fear, hatred and extremism, or simply to entertain or educate.

But no story can get to the essence of who we or others are. It's this essence, this core aspect of you and me that is beyond any story, especially our own story we tell ourselves.

So why do we use stories?

We use them to educate, entertain, engage and enrol our fellow humans. But if taken as 'the truth', they are a trap.

I trust this will become clear as you read on.

THE TRAP OF OUR STORY

My story, your story, our collective stories and their collective stories – any story ever told or yet to be told – is the trap most of us are entangled in today or will live in tomorrow.

A story can be a catalyst for healing, or it can keep us stuck in anxiety, worry and upset.

Useful stories can be signposts, pointing towards a deeper reality within the teller and listener. Unhelpful stories come from and feed upon fears and myths existing within our memories. These are our personal, family and cultural stories.

Innocently we reinforce our worldviews by eating up stories that feed them, to our view of our self and others – to our fantasies, fears and imaginings. Seeking the security of the known, we dig ourselves deeper into our ever-enlarging story, creating and embellishing 'the truth of it' as we go.

We call our stories by many different names: reality, my life, how I am, the way I was born and raised, my conditioning, my gender, my race, nationality, religion, politics, identity. All come to appear from our perspective as being ‘the truth’ of who we are – and just as regrettably, who others are.

But listen – we are not our story! We never have been. We’re neither our past nor present story, nor any future elaboration we think into being and believe to be the substance of our life ... as being who we are.

Stories are an illusory construct we think into existence, appearing in our mind as ‘reality’. And they are the only reality we know – until we make up or *see* another.

Our imagined story – no matter what that is – is the counterfeit reality we imprison our self in. And ever shall it remain so until we wake up from that dream and actually *see what is* ... not what we remember it to be.

Who we are capable of being exists beyond these stories, and it is hidden from us, veiled by the story we create about ourselves, about others and every aspect of life.

Our stories are created from a nanosecond ago, right back to our beginning, maybe even before that. They manifest as ideas, experiences, beliefs, opinions, judgements, philosophies, values and knowledge around all that we consider good or evil, right or wrong, fact or fiction.

They all include what we think works best and what we think matters most. We accept from others or create afresh in our mind these stories, in which we innocently ensnare ourselves – surrendering our freedom from *seeing what is*; preferring to live in the pleasure and pain of our make-believe world.

In that process, we become ‘our story’. Being lost in it, we imagine ourselves to be the empowered creation or disempowered victim of our past, or current or future life and circumstances. This we claim as ‘reality’.

We, and our multiple relationships, become the way we tell ourselves life is, and the way we are, or they are.

Our ever-expanding stories masquerade in our mind as ‘the truth’ (potentially, and regrettably, including this story).

In awakening to and *seeing* the trap of our never-ending stories, we are freed to experience Possibility – the realm that exists beyond all stories, but which we may also, quite innocently, turn into our new ‘I have found the truth’ story.

Possibility is *seen* (only ever *seen*) in the moment we *see* beyond our story.

In that awakening, we *see* and understand how we have trapped ourselves in an endless story. It is then we start to gain clarity in regard to ‘Life and The Game of Living’.

In glimpsing the reality that precedes the formation of our stories, we can recognise that everything, absolutely everything, emanates from what I call Possibility. But remember as you read on, there are no answers to be found in any story, however factually true or painfully tragic (including this story).

Instead, look for 'reality' within your quietened mind and softened heart. Those are the gateways to awakening. The answers we seek await us in the realm of Possibility.

What follows is part of my story. But although it is as factually true as I can recall, it is not presented as 'the truth'.

It too is simply a series of signposts on my/our journey.

DEFINITIONS OF ESSENTIAL TERMS USED IN THE BOOK

'The beginning of wisdom is the definition of terms.'

Socrates

Throughout this book, key words and phrases are used repeatedly to convey meanings that are different from their general use and meaning. I trust that the following definitions will convey a sense of the meanings I give them. You may need to return to these as you read on.

Thought (with a capital 'T') is used to signify the Life energy enabling and creating the reality we call our life. Within the context of this book, 'Thought' in its unformed (energetic) state is the realm of Possibility. I do not claim to understand what Thought is specifically – this book is my attempt to flesh out the concept of Thought within the context of my own experiences.

thinking (with a small 't') is the form this Thought energy takes within our mind as our moment-to-moment cognition (thinking) and is the way we see or *see* and therefore experience our personal reality.

Possibility (with a capital 'P') is where the abstract, unfathomable domain of Thought meets our personal reality in the form of original ideas, brand-new concepts, fresh starts and transformed relationships. In a state of Possibility, we *see* new discoveries, previously *unseen* inventions, innovations and opportunities. More importantly, and fundamental to the lifeblood of this book, it is the realm of our transformation from who we mistakenly think we are to who, in our essence, we really are. It is the realm in which each of us can experience a profound feeling of kindness, deep understanding, great wisdom and *insightful* common sense – the mantra throughout this text. When directly experiencing life from that state of Possibility, irrespective of our circumstances, we are what we aspire to be. And in that state we feel empowered to take whatever next step it is we *see* we need to take.

awareness (with a small 'a') along with aware, awake, conscious, consciousness and understanding (used interchangeably) signifies that we actually *see* our thinking as the source of our reality and

understand what state we are experiencing in each moment. Our intensity of awareness is the degree to which we are awake in the moment to our thinking and the feelings generated by that thinking via our five senses – conscious of our beliefs, opinions and judgements; aware of our story around our life and Life as a mystery. It is the extent to which we *see* our thinking and feelings for being just that, not ‘the truth.’

Life (with a capital ‘L’) is my best stab at the mysterious source of life-giving Thought. Life is called by many other names: God, Universal Mind, Universal Intelligence, and more. I am agnostic. Why will become clearer as you read on. I hasten to add that from personal *insights*, there seems to be an unfathomable essence to you and me (and maybe all else) that exists *a priori* to anything I or you make up about it, which fuels all aspects of my and your life, and possibly the totality of life as you and I know it. I call that mysterious source (if there is one) Life. When experiencing life from a state of Possibility, I feel closest to what I sense as being the fountain ... that which I call Life.

see (italicised) along with *seer*, *seeing*, *seen*, *saw* and *insight* denote a deepened awareness into, a profound clarity around, and at its peak, revelation emanating from fresh Thought within the realm of Possibility.

what is (italicised) is *seeing* through (unchained from) our imaginings, already formed ideas, conditioned beliefs, opinions, judgements and knowledge (all our lifelong accumulated stories) to *seeing* the actuality of *what is* presenting before us. That is a state of inexplicable freedom – the only true freedom there is.

kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense denote a state of intense goodwill, sensitivity, deep perception and respect for all others and for the natural world. More specifically in the context of this book:

kindness (also referred to as ‘love’) is the feeling of – and expression of – warmth, unconditional respect, goodwill and regard for all others. For example – love or kindness is our natural instinct when we *see* beyond our need to be right and to make others wrong.

understanding is our innate (and mostly under-utilised) capacity to explore any subject, question, concern, problem or dispute free of our opinion, belief and judgement without being hidebound by our specific knowledge or expertise.

wisdom is our capacity to act from a coalescing of *insight*, perceptiveness, and discernment.

common sense (like wisdom) is a coalescing of our inherent natural intelligence, accumulated knowledge and experience of life in general. It is honed within the realm of Possibility.

the common good: Can anyone, in all honesty, foresee the consequences, intended or otherwise, of one's actions – whether they will work for or against the common good, or whether they will matter one way or the other? When used, this term refers to actions that will, on balance, do no harm. They will be actions that foster environmental, social, economic and societal sustainability. Above all else, they will be actions taken neither from an ideological, religious or socio-political stance, but from a state of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense, and will coalesce 'doing what works with doing what matters'.

our story refers to the self-created, accumulation of illusions we live in. It is the unrecognised prison we occupy. Reread the previous chapter, *Caveat lector*, if in doubt.

***what really works and what really matters* (italicised):** see 'Possibility' then 'kindness', 'understanding', 'wisdom' 'and common sense' above.

POSSIBILITY IN BRIEF

- Possibility exists prior to anything and everything we believe to be ‘the truth of the matter’.
- Possibility precedes our imagined, self-created, rock-solid reality as a state beyond our knowing, facilitating our transcending of what we had believed to be possible, reasonable or rational.
- Possibility exists beyond what is currently claimed to be irrefutable scientific facts and evidence-based truths.
- Possibility is ever-available whether we *see* it or not, and it exists (seemingly) independent of us.
- Possibility’s profound depth and scope are available to be discovered (and rediscovered) at any time in any place.
- Possibility allows us to *see* new creations and opportunities from the state of awareness that benefits the whole and not just the *seer*.
- Possibility is our inherent state of awareness when unshackled from our habitual, memory-based, conditioned thinking.
- Possibility is birthed by fresh Thought (never by recycled thinking, no matter how wonderful) and is a state of intense psychological, philosophical and spiritual freedom.
- Possibility is the realm of creativity, innovation and the solutions to what ails humanity.

DISTINGUISHING ‘POSSIBILITY’ FROM POSSIBILITY

Possibility is a state of heightened awareness.

‘If something can realistically happen, it’s a possibility.’ That dictionary definition is all well and good, but it’s not the meaning referred to in this guide.

Beyond this limited definition is a state of awareness in which our transformation can occur and seemingly unlimited Possibility is *seen*. Within this realm, Possibility is an enthralling reality and a life-altering state, holding the potential to transform our life and consequently our world ... and our influence on it.

Histories from most cultures speak of those who have *seen* beyond the veil of their ‘stories’ – ‘stories’ that conceal the creative power experienced when we open up to Life. In those exquisite moments, when both the obvious and the yet-to-be *seen* are witnessed, Possibility shows us a new reality.

Those historic and more recent explorers of Life, venturing into the realm of creation, have directly and deeply experienced fresh Thought – the genesis of Possibility. They’ve discovered the unconditional kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense that exist before the values, culture and conditioning that we inherit and expand upon, and that incarcerate us.

It is in that realm that we, too, *see* and experience Possibility and our own transformation. Possibility is the state in which we *see what is* and create a new future. A future directed by the same kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense felt and demonstrated by those mystics, saints and sages at the nucleus of the enduring religions and philosophies of the world.

Without *seeing* into the realm of Possibility, we repeat (to a lesser or greater degree) our ‘Groundhog Day’ experience of life.

On experiencing fresh Thought, we *see* Possibility. Our vision is attuned to *seeing* and creating a new future. *Seeing* Possibility and creating our life afresh might just be our most useful daily yoga – re-creating our relationships, organisations, and the world.

ONCE WE UNDERSTAND, THERE IS NO TURNING BACK

Possibility is a state of unconditional kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense available to all upon total surrender to the unknown.

It is common to *see* Possibility, *see* beyond the cloak of limitation, and experience fresh Thought and that state of grace, and still not live one's life at that level of awareness consistently.

That was, and is still, the case for me; I remain a work-in-progress. It may be the same for you. But for most, once Possibility is *seen* and its source understood, there is no turning back. Our life is transformed by each *insight*. The clarity and power of the *insight* is the determining factor.

For instance, we may experience an *insight* into where we hold racist thinking. As a result of glimpsing Possibility, we may become a more tolerant and accepting human being. It might subsequently happen, in a stressed, overwhelmed state, that we entertain (even for a few moments) racist thoughts if confronted by a person of another race in a way we find upsetting or threatening.

If, however, we have actually moved to a higher level of understanding, we will quickly come to *see* and recognise our thinking for what it is: a throwback to our earlier conditioning.

It is likely, in that moment of *seeing* our remnant prejudice, that we shift to a still-higher level of understanding and become even more tolerant and accepting.

With further insight/s we may ultimately move beyond even the trickery we play on ourselves with the notions of tolerance and acceptance, to a place of embracing others of different race, colour, religion and ethnic backgrounds with the same love, understanding, wisdom and common sense we have for our nearest and dearest.

That further shift occurs in the moment we *see* and understand that, paradoxically, even the concepts of tolerance and acceptance exist within the same context as intolerance and non-acceptance, or outright rejection and bigotry. We recognise that opposites cannot exist without each other. We have in that moment *seen* beyond the illusion of division and separation.

For another example of the intermittent or often-stalled upward movement in our consciousness, consider those of us who have deeply 'religious' and powerful 'born again' experiences, but fall from that state of grace and struggle to return.

That state of grace we experience emanates from the state of original Thought, the realm I call Possibility. However, in the context of religious belief, this experience, for most, is attributed to an externalised or exogenous personal guru, deity, god or saviour.

In an earnest and heartfelt desire to reconnect with our beautiful experience, we may devour religious or spiritually oriented books, join study and support groups, find a guru, or try all manner of religious or spiritual practices, seeking to reignite that profoundly beautiful, elevated state of awareness.

Because the seeker believes the source of their liberation is external to them rather than endogenous (accessed within), that search may end up a fruitless, lifelong pursuit.

But this searching to re-experience Possibility demonstrates that once we have had a deep experience of that realm, there is no turning back.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN LIES WITHIN

*Look within to your quietened mind and softened heart.
There lies the kingdom of heaven.*

The biblical saying, ‘The kingdom of God lies within’, seems little understood and thus left unexplored by most. So it is possible, more often usual, to glimpse Possibility, spike to a higher state of consciousness and not stabilise at that higher level.

While *seeing* Possibility and experiencing great clarity and beautiful feelings for a small percentage of time, I lived much of my life from a much lower level of understanding. Indeed, in observation of my own and others’ lives, it is clear that, with few exceptions, consciousness evolves incrementally over time as a direct result of reflecting on our inner world (or, for a handful, in a blinding revelation that may hold much firmer for much longer).

As said, for most, our consciousness rises gradually as a direct consequence of our sustained focus and commitment to exploring our inner world. The high level of attention required for continued growth to full awareness depends on our longing to *see* into that unconstrained world and our willingness to be liberated from our conditioning to *see* that unfettered reality.

Crucially for me, it was during a 30-day healing retreat in the Amazon jungle in 2010 that I *saw* more deeply into the potential scale and unlimited power of Possibility. And, were that reality to be experienced on a wider front, that it contained the unlimited potential to transform all that ails humanity.

My previous reality transformed. I *saw* that, because of its absolute neutrality, universality, non-denominationalism and impersonal nature, *seeing* Possibility enables each of us to cross all boundaries, transcend all beliefs, and potentially speak to the hearts of all people.

I *saw* with equal clarity that failing to *see* Possibility keeps us stuck in our story, forever building belief upon belief, opinion upon opinion, and judgement upon judgement – seeking more and more knowledge; and for many of us in the vain hope that we will find the reality of unconditional love and peace ... our true home.

The result – should we continue along the path most of humanity is treading, of belief, opinion, judgement, knowledge and expert learning – is a future that builds only on our individual and collective past, with the inevitable end being self-limitation and collective destruction.

EDUCATION, IDEOLOGIES AND DOGMAS

'I would rather have questions that can't be answered than answers that can't be questioned.'

Richard Feynman

The transformation many seek and that which humanity desperately needs cannot take place amid the mental maze and limitations of our existing education, ideologies and dogmas. Aware of it or not, each of us lives each moment either *seeing* Possibility (and living from a state of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense) or failing to *see* – blinded to Possibility by our story called, 'I know the truth'.

It is through those who live regularly influenced by Possibility that the world transforms person by person.

Once you *see* Possibility, you will hear their voices, recognise their perspectives, and be touched by their kind and fearless hearts. With these kindred spirits you can create a new world – a world increasingly under the influence of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense; a world where more are *seeing* Possibility rather than impossibility.

In short, Possibility presents us with the opportunity to transform ourselves and the world we think we know.

Imagine what the world would look like if Possibility was being experienced in the minds and hearts of all humanity – or even in ten percent of us. What would your world look like? What would your relationships look like? What would your work look like?

But how do we allow Possibility to come alive in our life?

EVER SO GENTLY

When looking at life through our lens of knowledge and experience, we forgo seeing Possibility.

In a state of feather-lightly held views (remaining unrestrained, unrestricted, and unimpeded by those views) we can, if we so desire, reflect on anything we think important.

We could reflect on a relationship, our health, life in general, sustainability, career, business or creative pursuits – whatever aspect of our life we care passionately about or are fascinated by.

We can reflect anywhere: working at a hobby, lying in bed, having a shower or going for a run. It can be in the hubbub of city life or the tranquillity of a secret hideaway. Today, for me, it was lying back in my dentist's chair.

The place is of no consequence. Possibility exists for us anywhere, everywhere and at any time we give up our attachment to our beliefs, opinions, judgements and knowledge and surrender to the unknown.

It is not for us to visualise, affirm, imagine, pray for, meditate on, or do anything with the idea dear to us. Gently cradle it for as long as it stays in your mind. Recall it as and when you want to, or as it involuntarily pops back into your mind.

For example, take a person who wants to help disadvantaged children read more. How might *seeing* Possibility allow them to carry out that desire?

One way is for them to put the idea on a very low flame and let it simmer in the back of their mind. They should maintain just enough energy to keep it warm. And it can be any idea as to how they can help these children, as at this point the aim is to let these ideas quietly bubble away in their mind.

If the idea remains relevant (important) to them, it will recur time and time again. They will gradually, or quite quickly in some cases, have all sorts of other ideas around that central idea. Possibility will deliver to them the possibilities on how they might go about achieving their desired outcome.

And they may also think of how impossible it is to achieve their goals. How they don't have the resources, time, contacts, funds, knowledge, etc. to get the project up and running will also most likely come to mind.

It is also possible that what they contemplate may spawn different ideas that are even more important and relevant to them. If the first idea doesn't keep coming to mind, it's no longer a priority. Trying to force or control our thinking is of no use, in fact quite counterproductive to *seeing* into the realm of Possibility.

If the idea of helping children read more truly holds their fascination, fresh ideas will come to mind on how they might start.

My idea of having my own caravan business materialised with a very old, nine-foot mini-caravan purchased for peanuts. It was what I could afford and could manage, and my dad and I set about to renovate it on the driveway of our home. The scale of the goal didn't influence our starting point. We just took one miniscule step.

What happens to us when we *see* Possibility is that we *see* a step we can take in the direction of our vision, then another, and another, and so on.

This is the process (quick or slow) of a yet-to-be-*seen* reality, which in its own good time becomes clear in our mind's eye as a partially or fully formed vision. The idea is *seen*, in enough form for us to act, to start creating our heart's desire, whatever that may be. And it's fun. It's exciting. It's Possibility unfolding in our personal reality.

We each move in our own way. But when reflecting on something seemingly out of reach, just observe any thoughts of impossibility or limitation. Just enjoy reflecting on and considering any ideas from the realm of Possibility that might come to mind.

Who knows what ideas may come up if one wants to enable disadvantaged children to read more. They may *see* that just one child reading is an important step in the direction of their vision. Possibility is in action. Who knows what we will *see* next, once action has taken place and we are witnessing a new reality.

Understand, though, that we have no control when we enter the realm of Possibility. What we *see* is out of our hands.

Possibility is *seen* when we move into a not-knowing, innocent state of awareness. At that point all our beliefs, opinions and judgements will be *seen* simply as ideas that we hold, and not as the stifling 'truth' that once blinded our view to that deeper reality.

HOW DO WE DO THAT?

For me, it occurs like this:

- An idea comes to mind that I am fascinated by, feel motivated by, captivated by (for example: how can I get disadvantaged children to read more?).

- This idea may have come out of the blue, or it might have been triggered by reading something, or being told about something, but I don't *see* it in its complete form.
- I play with the idea, tinker with it, toss it around in my mind.
- I don't want to let it go.
- It seems too important.
- The idea persists, and might do so for an hour, day, week, month, year or more. In the case of the Possibility Workshop, it has been, in various forms, popping into my mind for several decades. (I didn't have a name for it. I just wanted to share with the world the power of original Thought and the trap of its form – our memory.)
- Time is not relevant. I just leave it simmering away.
- *Seeing* a workable way forward is what I am waiting to discover.
- My level of fascination with the idea is what sustains my motivation to realise the vision.
- My fascination with and desire for the project is key.
- Out of the blue, a fresh Thought occurs of how I might engage with and bring the idea to life.
- This 'light-bulb' moment might happen many times in many different ways, but it might not be within my capacity to carry out the 'plan' at that time.
- The way I am looking at it might be too big for me, or just not the right fit at a particular time.
- These ideas *are always* fresh or, if previously experienced, *seen* again as if for the first time and generally in a new way.
- Out of the blue, I then *see* how to start in a way that makes perfect sense.

- It's yet another 'a-ha' moment along the journey.
- It might not make any sense to anyone else. In fact, it often doesn't, as those you might talk to about your idea haven't *seen* what you have *seen* so it doesn't seem feasible or it might look downright impossible.
- In all probability, I will, if that is still my heart's desire, start immediately carrying out the plan.
- I don't have to; however, if moved to, I will begin.

The examples from my life where I *saw* Possibility all saw the light of day roughly in the way described above. The Philosophy of Everyday Living Centre was (initially under another name) an early example of the Possibility Workshop.

As you read on through this guide, the foregoing will, I trust, make increasing sense to you.

OUR TRANSFORMED FUTURE APPEARS TO US IN FRESH THOUGHT

The realm of Possibility is the antithesis of all our certainty about how things are, or should be.

In the realm of Possibility we *see* and then create our life and worldview afresh each time we enter it – a life and worldview increasingly imbued with kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense. But no! This renewal is still not ‘the truth’, still not something to hold on to. Doing so is the antithesis of what I am pointing to.

Confused? I’m not surprised. It is counter-intuitive.

We are raised to be believers. Our state of confusion gives way, if we are *willing to surrender* to not knowing.

However, we simply don’t know how to not know or feel at peace with not knowing – with not needing to know.

And it is in that state of not knowing that we *see* Possibility. When *seeing* into that realm, life makes perfect sense to us – for some of us it may be for the very first time.

We humans seem to need to latch on to something, to believe in something. Most people feel great relief in having a belief. They don’t feel peace, happiness, love, or understanding, but they feel safe and relieved in having a belief.

Beliefs are not ‘the truth’. They are simply beliefs – ideas we ingest as being ‘the truth’. They are a ‘bunny rug’. And anything can turn into a ‘bunny rug’. The ideas in this book, rather than being a signpost pointing towards Possibility, could become one.

A friend recently got upset with me when I told him that for me there seems to be no ‘the truth’ and, because of that, I felt free – free of that certainty, of what I *see* as impossibility thinking. Unchained from ‘this is the truth’ – according to me, to someone else, some book, some philosophical belief or faith-based system – we are liberated. Unburdened, we are free to *see* Possibility.

I added that I did not know that there was no ‘the truth’ because that too would be a belief. I simply did not know, and didn’t know if I did or didn’t know, and was at peace with that.

He said that thinking like that was crazy. He added that if someone asked me for directions to my local shop, I could not tell them, as I did not know for certain the direction, even if I did, because I did not know 'the truth' of where it was.

I responded that for me, the shop and its location exists on the physical plane, and is a material reality. Its location is a verifiable fact, observable by anyone with eyesight.

On the other hand, ideas are a psychological reality. Our faith, beliefs, opinions and judgements are just that. We claim them to be 'the truth', but they are not ultimately verifiable. Even the most powerful of them exist only as an illusion in our memory. And our belief/faith is a very slippery slope down which humanity seems hell-bent on continuing to slide. And like a child climbing back up the ladder to yet again slide back down, so too do we slide and climb and slide again with our faith or beliefs.

A CARDBOARD BOX POINTING TO POSSIBILITY

*'Every moment we are new and full of infinite
possibility as we are part of ALL.'*

Jay Woodman

I will share with you the beginnings of my explorations into original Thought and Possibility.

Before that time, my interests in and explorations of how our mind works were in and around our already formed thinking (both conscious and unconscious) and how to manipulate that thinking for our benefit. The distinctions between life-transforming original Thought and recycled thoughts will become clear as you read on.

Arriving in the mail one morning in the late 80s was an invitation to attend a two-day workshop in Hawaii, called 'Management Through Understanding'.

The write-up indicated that our thinking is the core determinant of our management and leadership effectiveness.

Although short on detail, I was mightily intrigued by this invitation. My state of mind at that time was often poor, and in spite of the evidence of how counterproductive that was, I seemed unable (or better put, lacked the understanding) to do anything sustainable about that.

As it turned out, I didn't attend the workshop; however, determined to get hold of any material on the approach, I phoned the organisers in the USA and asked if the sessions were being recorded. They were, so I ordered and paid for a complete set to be posted in due course.

However, it was not until nine months later that a cardboard, shoe-box-sized package arrived from an unrecognised overseas source. By then I had completely forgotten my earlier enquiry into the sessions.

What I discovered inside that package turned out to be the catalyst for a transformed life.

A range of presenters spoke about Thought and thinking in a way that I hadn't heard before. With mind-blowing clarity they addressed how our use of Thought either supports us and our leadership, or works against us and undermines our endeavours.

And I heard more than that. I heard that Thought and its direct products, our moment-to-moment thinking, feelings and behaviour, were the source of *all* human experience, *all* of the so-called good, bad and indifferent.

I heard that Thought is the source of our reality. I heard how Thought manifests in our mind as our thinking and is the only reality we can know in each moment we are thinking whatever it is we are thinking.

Now, even though I was familiar with related ideas, what I heard then registered in a new and profoundly influential way. My life and experiences started to make some real sense for the first time.

I learnt that Thought creates and manifests as our personal thinking. Our feelings mirror our thinking and our actions/behaviour play out according to our thinking: cause and effect – no matter what. And it happens at pico-speed, and it does so in every moment of our life.

It wasn't as though I hadn't heard that same sequence expressed before. I had. This time, however, I heard it in a life-altering way. As fast as we can think, we can either stay stuck by continuing to have the same or similar thinking, or in a flash, with fresh thinking – what I now call thoughts from the realm of Possibility – we can change course no matter what our circumstances are and might remain.

What I hadn't heard or understood before was this: if we can *see* or recognise 'that we think', and be awake enough to not be overwhelmed and ruled by our less-than-helpful thinking, we will regain our bearings in the face of any thinking that is upsetting or even dangerous to us or to others.

The degree to which we are witness to our thinking is the measure of our awareness of the quality (usefulness or destructiveness) of our thinking.

And I heard so much more – I heard that if and when we experience fresh or original Thought (from the realm of Possibility), we *see* in an entirely new, potentially transformative way, whereby our past loses its grip as we *see* life afresh.

Dear Reader, I hope you can *see* that what we see, feel, hear, taste and smell doesn't make us think and act the way we do. No. Thought, expressed via our thinking, is the engine room of how we *see* or see and therefore create our experience. Our experience is either from Possibility or impossibility in each moment.

When we smell magical aromas from the kitchen, reminding us of a childhood delight, it is Thought powering our memory, our olfactory system, activating our juices and creating our desire to sink our teeth into that delicious hot apple pie and cream.

It hit home that this was the way we humans have evolved. And the kicker was that to whatever degree we are awake (conscious) of that fact of Life and The Game of Living, our feelings and actions are ameliorated.

On a diet to regain or sustain our desired weight, if we *see* our thinking is the issue and resist the pull created by our thinking and feelings (desires) to chomp into the piping-hot apple pie and cream, we stay with our diet.

Or, in a fit of rage, we might think we'd like to kill. In understanding that the urge we experience to kill is created by our thinking – not the other person, no matter how heinous their behaviour might be – we can step away from that urge. Our feelings and possible actions can be *seen* to be fired by that thinking – thinking that will pass. Thinking that we don't have to act upon.

I was inspired by what I *saw* and the opportunity for renewal that was clearly available. I saw this not only for me and for Fleetwood, but for transforming what ailed humanity and the world.

I understood that we could get a fresh start, no matter what.

And that the circumstances of our life right now are what they are, but they do not define who or what we are or what we are capable of from this moment forward.

As I started to wake up to my Thought-created reality, and experienced fresh *insights*, I lived increasingly from feelings of kindness and a new experience of understanding, wisdom and common sense – attributes inherent within the realm of Possibility. And in so doing, I transformed long-entrenched, less-than-helpful conditioning, and over time I increasingly contributed to the common good.

For example, my dad had a bad temper; he got angry with me quite a lot. He gave me some harsh beatings, and back-handers around my ears on a regular basis. He was particularly judgemental and criticised me often. I grew up feeling resentful and angry towards him. And so from this, I created the idea that I was not good enough, and that I was unlovable and unworthy.

I was a decent footballer, but the best I could remember my dad saying was, 'You've got two left feet'. He was, of course, much more than that, but I latched onto those negative memories. And like others receiving similar or worse treatment from a parent, I could have grown up feeling quite good about myself. It is how we think about ever-unfolding events and circumstances that determines how we experience our life.

On coming to understand the nature of Thought, I *saw* how I was carrying my earlier thinking around with me, harbouring grievances, and how these useless memories were strangling my relationship with my dad – and with others.

I came to *see* his innocence – how he had related to me out of habit. I remembered being told how he had been badly treated as a child, and how his father had had a bad temper. I understood that he had behaved in the same conditioned way his dad had behaved towards him. I *saw* that his behaviour towards me was just a habit. It was a habit he had created and unconsciously used in dealing with his frustration with or concern for me.

I realised that he loved me absolutely, and that was just the way he was back then. Because of this realisation, my relationship with my dad transformed. I felt closer to him and spent more time with him. In his last five years as a frail, old man, I took him to the football each Saturday during the season. Mum prepared a flask of coffee and some tasty snacks. I would wrap a blanket around our legs as we sat there, close and warm, cheering on our team.

Even back then, with relatively little understanding, the blend of simplicity and profundity expressed in those audio-taped sessions blew my mind. Who wouldn't want to spend time *seeing* Possibility and an ever-renewing world?

IN *SEEING* POSSIBILITY, OUR FEAR DISSIPATES – WE JUST DO WHAT WE *SEE* TO DO

*'Hell, there are no rules here, we are trying to
accomplish something.'*

Thomas Edison

Curious as to who had sent me the original workshop invitation, I tracked down Reese Coppage, an entrepreneur. Reese was a fellow member of the Young Presidents Organisation Inc., living in Tampa, Florida. It was his 'illegal' use of the YPO database – contacting members about a workshop that fell outside the organisation's programs – that enabled me to access this material. Reese broke the rules – as entrepreneurs do – and I am forever grateful that he did.

Reese subsequently sent across bundles of assorted materials, including books, audiotapes, academic papers and general articles on Thought and its all-encompassing role in our life. More specifically, they were on how the reality in which humanity lives, works, plays and wages war is created.

I became a lifelong student and observer of the inside-out nature of the human experience and all that entails.

It was two years later, after investing 27 years in the Fleetwood Corporation, that I *saw* a totally different opportunity. One morning I woke up knowing my time there was over. I had lost interest and was failing to do my job as it needed to be done.

A few weeks later I was gone, having handed over the leadership to two senior executives as joint managing directors. They took the company on a two-decade phase of incredible growth, development and prosperity. It was 1990 and I was 48 years old.

It was still much later that I came to actually *see* that what we see out there in the world (for most of us, for much of the time) is not '*what is*'. Rather, what we see and experience is what we remember it to be from our already conditioned past – the picture we already have imprinted in our memory.

As I said earlier, waking up to the 'inside-out nature of the human experience' is an incremental process. But each awakening is a milestone.

Each page that follows in this guide aims to help flesh out how we 'awaken' and what it means to awaken.

SOME TIMES WHEN I'VE *SEEN* POSSIBILITY

*Possibility is a state of awareness in which we
see new beginnings.*

If I am writing about the possibility of Possibility, you may question how I know of its potential. Well, what follows are some of the ideas that manifested in my mind – within the realm of Possibility – and the opportunities that were revealed to me and which I have acted upon.

Each one of us has these and other types of *insights*. Mostly, we don't recognise their potential or understand where they come from. Many of us don't act upon our ideas. Impossibility, if *unseen*, gets in our way.

As you read episodes from my life, you may notice ways that Possibility is showing up in your life.

You will read that Possibility materialised for me primarily in business, though not only there. And it showed up early! Your *insights* might show up in some other field and at any time.

Two of the many facets of Possibility are: *seeing* opportunity where others don't, and *seeing* the scope for innovation where none was previously *seen*. Another is in recognising the challenges likely to be thrown up and the ways to overcome them. Yet another, and probably the most important, is in experiencing our innate courage and determination to execute the idea/s *seen*.

As said, most of these ideas are run of the mill. Others, unrelated to business and of greater personal value are discussed in following chapters.

1946: My first entrepreneurial idea was as a five-year-old. I collected and sold nasturtium flowers in used food jars for a half-penny or penny a jar, depending on the jar size. They were bought by residents and passers-by of the block of flats in which Mum, Dad and I lived. We came from 'the wrong side of the tracks' and the flowers came for free from a nearby demolition site. That was my early start to a business career.

1952: At 11 years of age, during the Christmas holidays, I set up a comics exchange in a corner of my parents' shop. I had collected comics since I could read and kept them in pristine condition – a useful aspect of my tendency to be obsessive.

The business idea was 'one of mine for one of yours plus a penny'. And for those that didn't have a penny, 'one of mine for two of yours'. I earned over £12 and, as some of you might know, there were 144 pennies to a pound. I also massively increased the 200 or so comics I started out with. Business was brisk during those six weeks and it wasn't just kids who clamoured for the comics. People of all ages wanted to do business!

1958: In my first job as an office boy, aged 16, with The Royal Exchange Assurance (a British fire, accident and marine insurance company), I purchased salvaged goods destined for auction, and sold them to family, friends and neighbours. The company recovered more for their salvage than from sending it to auction, and I made extra income. This was the first time, I was told (probably falsely), that an employee had *seen* to do this since 1720, when the company was founded.

Apart from changing the manager's blotting paper, date stamp, filling his fountain pen with ink, and going out each day to buy his lunch, I had other jobs such as filing letters, insurance proposals and copies of expiry and renewal notices. My predecessor hadn't done a particularly good job of filing (it cost him his job) and, seeing as I was an organised individual, I put it all in pristine order.

However, a long-unaddressed aspect of the filing that had existed well prior to the person I replaced, and had worsened over time, was a back room where the floor was knee-deep in unfiled material. It was very dated, some of it even going back fifty years (written in copperplate handwriting).

With much of it scattered, some in busted binders and broken files, and with no semblance of a system for finding anything, it was a bureaucrat's nightmare. On the few occasions I was asked to search for something, I came up empty-handed. And I was a beaver. It was beyond rare that anyone rummaging through that pile found the document they sought.

I had a bright idea. I *saw* the obvious – the time wasting, frustration and hopelessness of the situation for those trying to find any documents in that mess – and decided to fix it.

Without reference to anyone, I obtained 16 very large chaff bags. Armed with them and a getaway truck I had arranged to arrive later, I went into the office early on a Sunday. Selecting what little that could be salvaged, I put that aside then filled the chaff bags with the rest and had them taken to the tip.

Now, in the late 50s, children were to be seen and not heard. In the same way, an office boy had no authority and received little respect. You were just expected to jump when asked.

I couldn't believe it, but on Monday morning, Alan Blunt, a senior underwriter, went to look for a document in that room. When he opened the door, he was greeted by organisation – a neat row of the remaining material but not what he was looking for. He immediately came looking for me. On being told

what I had done, he headed for the assistant manager's door. Quickly returning, he told me to see the boss.

Angus Glendenning was my first boss and a great bloke. In response to his question as to why I had done what I had done, I told him something like this: 'Sir, it seemed to me that it was a problem that could not be sorted out. Most, if not all the files, were broken and their contents scattered. Those that still contained relevant files, I kept and put in order. Finding a document was near on impossible. The task of trying to sort the mess would take several people days and, as most of the stuff was redundant, it would be a waste of resources. It was clear to me that if I simply got rid of the ongoing pain, within a short time everyone would see the benefit of being rid of it.'

His response was short and something like: 'John, I'm glad you took the initiative. Next time please ask me.'

1960: At 19 years of age, with hard-earned savings from a thrifty approach and a financial and mentoring partnership with my father, I took on a dirt-cheap, badly run-down delicatessen in Perth's poorest neighbourhood. Its five prior owners had all gone broke.

We approached our bank, but they wanted nothing to do with our venture and strongly cautioned us against going ahead. Although wafer-thin on finance, we proceeded anyway, based on a very simple but out-of-the-box idea detailed below.

Within 12 months we increased turnover 600 percent. According to the sales and deliverymen from our various suppliers, it had become the best-performing deli in the Perth metropolitan area. Their yardstick was that we purchased more of their product each week than any other deli in the metro area.

The neighbourhood was very poor and was made up of pensioners, single parents, disabled people and families on welfare. Only a small percentage of the people who lived there were employed. 'Maniana' was a State Housing Area, later pulled down and replaced.

Aside from the good shopkeeping employed, such as an increased range of the best produce, good presentation and delivering the promise to our customers (see the chapter, BEING IN SERVICE AND 'DELIVERING THE PROMISE'), our key finance strategy (original idea) was the simple but crucial difference between success and failure.

We discovered during our inquiries that each of our predecessors had extended credit to their customers, and that made up around 85 percent of their sales. With that demographic, the resultant level of bad debt had overwhelmed each shopkeeper and had been the primary, if not the only, symptom of their failure. As you read on, you'll come to *see* why it was a symptom, not a cause.

What amazed us was that, although crystal clear to anyone that could actually *see what is*, each subsequent owner continued to offer credit, believing (I can only guess) that they couldn't do business without offering it.

We decided on a zero-credit policy.

Initially, because of how attractive the shop had become, those in the area who paid cash and had previously shopped elsewhere started to shop with us. Those that wanted credit, which was 85 percent of the turnover we started out with, went elsewhere if they could get credit. If they couldn't, they paid cash with us.

Eventually all of these poor payers ran out of easily accessible shops from which they could get credit. Finally, because they had no options left, they returned to shop with us, but this time paying cash. A benefit to them and a decision that kept us in business.

Our 'fresh idea' was that while it would take some time (actually only a few weeks), we were certain that we would regain and keep their business (and our solvency) by not giving them credit.

Taking this step was easier said than done. I stuck to my guns in the face of sometimes heart-rending pleadings and threatening abuse from others. And it worked out.

At our deli, the customers had no option but to budget their weekly outgoings and purchase only their necessities. It was a simple idea but one necessary (in that area) to having a sustainable business. It was, for the first time in its short history, really in service to the common good.

1963: By 21, I was working seven days a week, including Christmas Days and Good Fridays, from 7 am to 7 pm, or in the summer months as late as there were customers to serve. As you can imagine, this type of lifestyle for a young man was restrictive! I wanted to move on. We sold the business at a good profit.

I placed an advertisement in the classifieds of our main daily. Having listed my talents, abilities and experience, I was invited to apply for several positions, and accepted one in which I had zero experience.

The company, Modern Caravans, primarily a hirer but also a manufacturer and seller of caravans, had not sold a single unit in the four months prior to my starting. Though I had not holidayed in one, not even looked inside one, I sold 44 caravans in five months. Experience is over-rated when it comes to succeeding. As you read through this guide, you will see why other attributes, primarily our state of awareness in *seeing* Possibility, are so much more important.

1964: *Seeing* that the company was straightjacketed by its rigid thinking, I resigned one Friday night and started my own business the next morning from the driveway of my parents' home. It was 24 February 1964.

At 22, with the briefest experience under my belt and (pre-Australia's currency conversion in 1966) with £1000 (part of my savings from the deli), I started Fleetwood Caravans in partnership with my father (he also put in £1000). Buying a very old second-hand caravan for £100, we renovated it and sold it for

£225. I worked out that we earned about 2/6 (two shillings and six pence) per hour each for our labour. But it was a satisfying start.

I clearly recall in that first week, as we worked on renovating that old caravan, saying to Dad that within ten years this business would be the largest company of its type in Australia. Dad may well have put my thoughts down to youthful audacity, yet I *saw* Possibility as clearly as I had with how to transform the derelict deli three years earlier. Ten years on, Fleetwood had become just that.

1969: Another example, although totally unrelated to entrepreneurship, was in *seeing* beyond what I had been raised to believe in – the infallibility of mainstream medicine. At 28, after stopping all treatment for an infectious condition I'd had since my early teens, I experienced my body's incredible ability to self-heal.

The condition, which manifested each time with intense pain and inflammation in my inner ear and throat, and inexplicably a recurring carbuncle on the thigh of my left leg, had progressively worsened over the years. Despite ongoing treatment with antibiotics, my body had reached a stage where post-treatment respite grew shorter each time between episodes of treatment. I gave up on the traditional medical approach. Stopping medication. I embarked on what naturopaths describe as a 'healing crisis' – a perfect storm of cleansing. For some days, intense pain, illness and delirium ensued, which eventually passed. The condition healed, aided and abetted by a vegan, mostly raw-food diet, and it has never returned. I experienced my body's innate ability to heal, given the right conditions.

1964–1990: During this almost 27-year period, Fleetwood was a highly creative and innovative organisation. It expanded rapidly from my parents' driveway through vertical and horizontal integration. We were instrumental in transforming the marketing, selling, servicing, insuring and the repair of all types of recreational vehicles, as well as the importation and distribution of camping gear, RV parts and accessories. Fleetwood also developed and refurbished caravan parks.

By 1972, we had set up the Western Australia 'Sir David Brand Awards' for tourism, which were later expanded upon and replicated in each Australian State, culminating in Australia's National Tourism Awards. These awards are acclaimed and celebrated annually.

Our vision and detailed plans for re-creating aspects of the industry were also embraced by the state and local governments, and proved transformative. The industry and, more importantly, the community are still reaping the benefits of that work today in the form of a popular model of Lifestyle Villages for the ove-45s.

In 1990, aged 48, I resigned as CEO and Chairman of Fleetwood, by then a publicly listed company on the Australian Stock Exchange.

We had navigated a very difficult period. I was ready for a fresh start.

Disposing of my shareholdings in a way that helped secure the company for growth and resigning all external board positions, I made a complete break with business. I had *seen* Possibility in other areas of my life and now needed to follow that vision.

1993: At 51, somewhat grounded by personal *insights*, and as a consequence of meetings with Sydney Banks (whom I'll introduce to you later) and some limited training with a number of leading coaches in the field, I opened the doors to a centre in Perth to share this understanding. The Philosophy of Everyday Living Centre was the first in its field outside North America.

Although I lacked formal qualifications in psychology, philosophy or spirituality, the Centre was highly successful, as evaluated by the results from the services it offered to people and organisations we worked with.

During the life of the Centre, apart from hundreds of programs and countless coaching and counselling sessions, we developed a hard-copy magazine, and every two months distributed 22,000 copies globally to foster the work of Sydney Banks and others in the field. We opened a small office in Bend, Oregon, USA, and developed a very comprehensive website taking the work of the practitioners and authors to the world for the first time. During its relatively short life, we attracted students from all over Australia, New Zealand, Asia, Europe, the UK and the USA. We were also invited to deliver programs and work with organisations internationally, including the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

2006: I retired from the Centre. Although the results being achieved were good and the Centre was continuing to grow and evolve, I didn't feel happy with my leadership nor was I satisfied with either my own level of grounding or that of my colleagues – and there was no one, I thought, that could step up and replace me. Each of us was doing the best we could see or *see* to do and, with my obsession for 'delivering the promise', I was not satisfied.

Weeks later I was diagnosed with cancer of the prostate. Thus began a new journey in supporting my body's healing. Guided by my earlier experience, I embraced a transformed lifestyle, which continues to this day. This phase is outlined in a little more detail later in this guide.

2010: A seminal experience for me. During a retreat in Peru, I *saw* into the realm of Thought and Possibility with a level of clarity not previously *seen*. That encounter is fleshed out later. This guide and the Realm of Possibility Project Workshop (outlined in Appendix Two) were born from this experience.

2012: Although my condition stabilised, probably as a result of my dramatically changed lifestyle, several conventional health retreats, and other alternative experimentations since 2006, the cancer started

to grow and move. I decided to have my prostate surgically removed in late 2012. That was the common-sense step to take. It appears today from the pathology reports from subsequent tests that I am in the clear. I am relieved and very grateful for the gift of a highly skilled Sydney-based surgeon, Dr Philip Stricker, as well as his expert colleagues, and the robotic technology they used so effectively.

2013: At bedtime on 27 December, I read an essay on anthropogenic global warming. I had been concerned about, and for some years involved in, the philosophy and practice of sustainability. One of the dozens of articles, essays and several books I had read, this article cut deep.

I was unable to sleep, tossing and turning in mental anguish. It seemed clear to me that unless humanity dramatically reduced and ultimately eliminated its dependence on fossil fuels and the greenhouse gases emitted as a by-product, the planet would likely become too hot to support life as we know it. I felt the drive to dedicate my experience and energy towards redressing global warming.

Although it was still clear that the number-one challenge facing humanity was the omnipresence of impossibility thinking, the escalating emissions of greenhouse gases from fossil fuel and the refusal to redress these issues were impossibility thinking in action, and clearly the number-two challenge (albeit only a symptom of the first).

At 3 am I started writing an action plan for Climate Action Now (CAN), which was to be an organisation dedicated to informing, educating, motivating and inspiring people globally to dramatically reduce and, where possible, eliminate their CO₂ emissions. At age 72, it was still Possibility manifesting in action.

2014: Once more I *saw* that within the realm of Possibility we can change direction on a dime when we *see* the obvious. On 4 November, in a Skype conversation with a friend, colleague and climate-change activist in Canada, I realised that the rationale for starting CAN was no longer valid for me, as global circumstances had changed dramatically. Climate scientists were now being taken seriously by more and more people worldwide, especially by governments and their policy makers, as well as Main Street. The job CAN was designed to do now appeared redundant. It was time to move on.

2018: This guide is now complete. Possibility awaits you and me! What form will it take? The Realm of Possibility Workshop – who knows?

SELF-DISCOVERY AND MEETING SYD

'If I were to wish for anything, I should not wish for wealth and power, but for the passionate sense of the potential, for the eye which, ever young and ardent, sees the possible. Pleasure disappoints, possibility never. And what wine is so sparkling, what so fragrant, what so intoxicating, as possibility!'

Søren Kierkegaard

This chapter covers a few more milestones in my journey to discovering the source of and access to Possibility. These are my best recollections of what seems relevant for inclusion. As explained, our memory is fallible (and I mean *really* fallible), and this rendition might be at variance with the memories of others whose paths intersected with mine at that time.

Since early on, I ached for inner peace. I felt disconnected from others and wanted to connect. I longed for a sense that my life had meaning. I'm not sure what it was exactly, but I felt adrift as a child, teenager and even in my forties. Some of you may have felt similar – maybe some of you still do.

At 14 or so, I began reading books on religion, spirituality, self-help psychology, and philosophy. That interest endured and morphed into my encounters with various programs, workshops, retreats and trainings on these and related subjects. Disliking school intensely, and with my father wanting me to 'earn a crust', I left at 15, hungry for real-world discovery, action and freedom.

In my search, I undertook some years of one-on-one and group therapy. As part of my vocation as a businessman, I also invested heavily in studying and taking courses and attending seminars on the many aspects of business, leadership and organisation.

To some, these two deep interests – the world of business and the world of the esoteric – might seem at odds. Quite the contrary.

Some of the material I read on business and the esoteric impacted me deeply. Some of the wide-ranging therapeutic and spiritual-growth involvements and hard-nosed business trainings I experienced had a significant impact too. And some aspects of both didn't seem to touch me at all. But every single book, audio and videotape, every personal engagement contributed to my inner journey of self-discovery ... yes, everything about business and the mystical, equally so.

Each supported me (although often in challenging and very uncomfortable ways) along my path to being a more peaceful, productive and connected human being.

Significantly, in 1987, as mentioned earlier, I happened upon the writings and tape-recordings of theosophist and author Sydney Banks, a Scot who had migrated to Canada in his twenties.

In 1989, I travelled to Florida and participated in my first workshop, given by one of Syd's students, Chip Chipman, aptly named '*Leadership from the Inside-out*'. It was along the same lines as the conference I mentioned earlier, 'Management Through Understanding'. I continued to read and re-read material and listen and re-listen to tapes from that perspective, but went no further. Business at that time was tough. However, I was captivated.

In 1991, not long after I retired from Fleetwood, while on sabbatical with a friend travelling around North America, I went to Salt Spring Island, off the coast of British Columbia, where I met Syd for the first time.

Over subsequent years, particularly in North America, I met many other explorers of Possibility (though none used this term, then or now), as many were inspired by Syd's discoveries. They too had come to recognise the inside-out nature of the human experience, and to understand that what we think in each moment is our reality. Each had found their vision for resolving what ailed them and their relationships. For some, it even went further, to resolving what troubles families, organisations, businesses or, on a global scale, what ails humanity. As you will hopefully come to *see*, it all boils down to one thing.

Syd's message was non-religious, and although I tended to steer away from the term (as it has meanings that are not helpful to many people), those hearing Syd would say his message was 'spiritual' in nature. Notwithstanding, his approach was down to earth, with universal application across the spectrum of human experience.

Many of those drawn to Syd's teachings have made their own discoveries, written, recorded and taught about the omnipresent, omnipotent role of Thought in our lives.

Among them were people from all walks of life – social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, doctors, teachers, trainers, ministers of religion, professors, businessmen and women, mums and dads.

I trained with several of Syd's students over many years. I am particularly grateful for the times in discovery with Linda and George Pransky PhD, Judith Sedgeman EdD, Robert Kausen and Michael Bailey. I spent considerable time with them, either in person or in classes and workshops on numerous extended trips to North America and/or, pre-Skype, by the hour on long-distance coaching calls.

I also sponsored thirteen training-based visits to Australia of eminent teachers and trainers over a period of years. In addition to some of the previously mentioned were Joe Baily MA, Gordon Trockman MD, Jack Pransky PhD, and Keith Blevens PhD.

Dr Carol Ringold, a psychologist from Florida, spent a year at our Centre as our first clinical director. Those mentioned above are just a few of the wonderful coaches and teachers I feel grateful to have met and journeyed with.

This process of self-discovery continued to unfold, glimmer by glimmer, *insight* by *insight*. This is often the way our life unfolds once we recognise the all-embracing power of Thought as the original source behind our day-to-day living and its creative, ingenious face – Possibility.

As dedicated students, we *see* more clearly beyond the constraints of our past – our beliefs, opinions, judgements and accumulated knowledge. We come to *see* and release what we have been told is ‘the truth’.

But some of our discoveries are more dramatic than others.

Self-discovery *seen* via original Thought is yours. You own it! You can rightfully claim 100-percent ownership of whatever you find within the clear space of your own mind. It comes from your innate capacity for experiencing original Thought and is yours for life. It is an unshakeable deep-seated understanding, and – it’s still not ‘the truth’. Rather, it’s the result of you or me *seeing* Possibility at that point in time. There is and always will be more to *see*.

HEALING THE PHYSICAL THROUGH MIND AND SPIRIT?

'Relinquish your attachment to the known, step into the unknown and you will step into the field of all possibilities.'

Deepak Chopra

Through randomly spaced *insights* over the next 20 years, peaking in Peru in 2010, I came to *see* life increasingly illuminated from these flashes of fresh Thought – each time *seeing* more deeply into the realm of Possibility.

The Peru leg of my journey started early in 2010, when an email arrived from a natural-health website in Canada. It stated that American documentary filmmaker Nick Polizzi was ‘auditioning’ individuals who had a chronic health condition to participate in a sacred medicine retreat. Their experiences were to be filmed. Having been diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2006, I was a potential candidate.

About two years earlier I had happened upon a DVD called *Simply Raw: Curing Diabetes in 30 Days*. Inspired by the remarkable results some of the participants experienced in healing diabetes, I was increasingly disposed to looking at alternatives to mainstream medicine in redressing my own condition.

I had written to the DVD’s producer acknowledging his work and later, through him, heard about the sacred medicine retreat in Peru.

As mentioned earlier, on being diagnosed with cancer, I had adopted a 100-percent raw and primarily organic wholefood diet, took lots of exercise and rest, and practised all-round healthy living.

But something was still missing.

Four years after my diagnosis, my body, although relishing my changed lifestyle (elaborated on below), was not reducing the cancer markers, which remained around what they had been when first biopsied.

There were, however, some amazing improvements in many other areas of my health. When first diagnosed with cancer, I had a lengthy list of other conditions. As a result of my changed lifestyle, I had experienced significant shifts in all of them.

An extract from my carefully compiled healing journal back then shows what they were and how they had normalised with my new diet and lifestyle.

The following chart indicates what *we can achieve* on *seeing* Possibility, and how that can make a quantum shift in how we *see* our health and wellbeing – whether we are hidebound by convention and only do what we have always done, or are willing to give alternatives a go.

- Overweight: from 83.7kg (184.1lbs) to 60.7kg (133.5lbs) – a drop of 23kg (50.6lbs).
- High blood pressure: from 135/85 to 110/60 (the blood pressure of a healthy, fit 21-year-old).
- Poor thyroid function: TSH down from 27.90 to 3.12 (the healthy range is from 0.40-4.00).
- Long-term diarrhoea: about six months into the raw-food program, after initially getting worse, the diarrhoea stopped. Normal bowel movements returned and have been sustained.
- Perennial skin ailments: after a very bad eczema attack on my shins, coinciding with my dramatic change in diet, all skin ailments, including tinea between my toes and a summer groin rash I had had since youth, disappeared and didn't return.
- Cholesterol: reduced from 5.3 to 3.8 (healthy range <5.5).
- LDL cholesterol (the bad stuff): down from 3.8 to 2.6 (healthy range <3.5).
- Coronary risk ratio: down from 5.3 to 3.8 (healthy range <5.0).
- Hay fever and itchy eye: this annual, debilitating condition suffered since childhood completely cleared up.
- Exhaustion: three times a week I engaged in serious group outdoor training – sprinting, endurance running and weight training – as well as weekly sessions of Iyengar Yoga. On my 'off days', I pursued other gentle and not-so-gentle physical activities – walking, gardening, solo running (6-10 kms) and working out in my home gym with yoga exercises and weights.

I reached a point at which my cardiovascular fitness and endurance level compared favourably with very fit people 30 years my junior. I felt very grateful because it was that life-threatening wake-up call and *seeing* Possibility that had galvanised me into action. Without that, I may have continued my sedentary and less-than-healthy way of living, and not been able to enjoy the vigorous life I still lead today approaching 77 years of age.

But my regular prostate test results clearly indicated that, while not getting worse, the prostate cancer refused to succumb to my dramatically changed ways. The carefully considered and implemented lifestyle changes had supported my body in clearing each acute condition. It had dramatically improved my overall health and fitness. And what I was doing was sufficient to support the immune system in holding the cancer in check, but it was insufficient to eliminate the core of cancer cells. As that was my remaining physical challenge, I needed to take my healing approach to a higher level.

So the notion of a sacred medicine retreat appealed. At the same time I had no idea what that was to entail. I suspected it might involve an emphasis on our state of awareness.

With minimal consideration I sent off an application to be one of the eight to go. You may find it hard to understand, but I didn't check out the *bona fides* of the proponents of the retreat and took at face value the limited info I had. I intuitively trusted them.

Later I learned that some 400 people had applied. After being notified that I'd made the first cut based on my condition and written application, I was informed that the final 30 or so were to be interviewed via Skype to narrow down the number to the required eight.

There was another factor. Not living in the USA, I didn't like my chances. The airfares of the eight participants getting to and from Peru were being paid for by the filmmakers, and Australia was a lot further away and the cost of airfares much higher. My cause was helped, I suspect, by my insisting on paying my fares there and back. Whatever the reason, I made the cut and was soon winging my way to South America.

LOW AND HIGH IN PERU

'The shell must break before the bird can fly.'

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

To date, the most profound experience on my inner journey of *seeing* Possibility occurred unexpectedly in Peru. I *saw* with intense clarity Possibility and impossibility – and the genesis of both. And although much had been written about what I called Possibility, a written guide toward *seeing* more clearly what Possibility is and what it isn't, hadn't been, as far as I knew, put together. I also *saw* the Realm of Possibility Workshop (see Appendix Two), which is a not-for-profit event available for those interested.

On 12 October 2010, I flew from Perth to Sydney, where I took a flight to Buenos Aires. After a 24-hour layover, I flew on to Lima, Peru's capital. After a further overnight layover, I met the others selected for the documentary, except for one who arrived two days later.

Together, with two of the film crew, we joined a commuter flight inland to Iquitos. From there, after an hour's bus ride further into the jungle, we reached our destination, Fundo D'Shanti, and met up with the rest of the documentary crew and our hosts, the Shaman and their support people.

The following are edited extracts from my daily journal (when I was physically able to write) of my 30-day Peruvian adventure. This is a period when I felt shredded, gutted and bereft for much of the time.

13 October 2010

Heading towards our destination by plane, the land below is a thick emerald green. Snaking rivers etch their black way through the thickness. Occasional black blobs define small lakes.

And now from the bus, approaching Fundo D'Shanti, another perspective on this luxuriant, lush, tangled tropical forest.

Being escorted from the road through a small, strangely degraded area, I am now immersed in this magical place by the sights and sounds that enclose this single-file track to base camp.

Onward to my hut – home for the next 30 days.

Coming from a relatively dry part of Australia, this land looks incredible from above, and it's wondrous driving through and enthralling when immersed in it. This is the living, breathing, talking, whispering nature's essence called the Amazon.

I sit in my very recently built (this centre is very new – we are the first intake) small, one-person hut. The pitch-blackness is filled with unfamiliar sounds. Pierced by my headlamp, it's possible to scribble these notes.

The camp is crude. Set up in a barely cleared space, each of the rudimentary buildings is separated by jungle. A decent walk away from my hut is a small open camp-kitchen and a new, jerry-built set of cold showers. These are the only pretence at luxury. A large, but still rudimentary, two-storey version of our individual huts accommodates the film crew up-top, with dining, sleeping for staff and storage below. A short walk away is another similar two-storey structure. This is the molaka: the meeting and ceremonial area.

Mine is one of eight newly knocked together single-person shelters, flung far and wide. Seeking out or speaking with the other applicants is verboten.

Each is here because we suffer from serious illness. Six are much more physically disabled than me. The seventh is tormented more by mental anguish and alcoholism than a specific organic illness.

26 October 2010

Today one man died. Arriving at the camp later than the rest, he was in terminal shape. The only mainstream medicine available to treat his condition was experimental and financially out of his reach. Given weeks to live and a lifelong adventurer, this became his last.

His death all but brought the program to an end, but after an autopsy confirmed natural causes and his death not caused by the treatment, we continued.

In Australia, the same event would have made very negative national headlines and a media furore. Back home, those who advocate alternatives are crucified when a failure occurs, while mainstream is venerated in spite of tens of thousands of failures and resultant deaths each year. Belief is powerful beyond belief.

Another participant was asked to leave for inappropriate behaviour. This left just six of us – two men and four women.

Of the remaining participants, I seemed to find the going toughest. The four women appeared stoic, especially the one that could barely walk unassisted. On the road back to civilisation, two claimed that they enjoyed their experience. They all seem to handle the stifling and oppressive heat, the primitive

comfort-less conditions and the plant medicines with grace and good spirits. So did the other male, who'd had some earlier experiences with the plant medicines and the senior shaman.

My time in Peru was tough, difficult, testing. My ego came to the fore in ways that were embarrassing. In the documentary, scenes of me depict a pathetic, self-pitying old codger. Indeed, for part of the time I was. My times of grace and good humour didn't make the final edit.

By choice, I had two small, raw, vegan meals each day, lunch at noon and dinner around five, with nothing but liquids in between. A year before going to Peru, I'd read a body of work on the numerous healing benefits derived from limiting meals to twice a day. I took that hairshirt with me into the jungle. What an idiot, you might be thinking. Me too!

As this book is exploring Possibility, I won't venture deeply into why a two-meals-a-day regime may be of benefit. Suffice to say that within the freedom of *seeing* Possibility, there are no limits to what we may decide to do with our life, even when it comes to addressing life-threatening illness. All sacred cows are slain. Options continue to appear.

Society's norms, supporting three meals daily, are for most an unquestioned reality. While it's wise to recognise and pay due respect to societal norms, it is also useful to be aware that society's habits are culturally created (made up). Sometimes rules are created out of love, understanding, wisdom and common sense, and at other times out of impossibility thinking. The genital mutilation of young women in certain cultures – imposed, at best, out of blind ignorance, or intentionally, for control over others – is an example.

All societal norms taken as 'the truth' of how things should be are self-created limitations to *seeing* Possibility. They can be limitations innocently self-imposed - without examination.

Unseen, our culture is just another block to personal liberation. I'm not suggesting that culture is bad, wrong or unhelpful. I'm saying that blindly, unquestioningly following any and every norm is living from impossibility – as you may recognise already or come to *see* as you read on.

In any case, my daily experimental routine (prior to and including Peru) consisted of fasting from the previous early evening meal to the next day's lunch. In effect I was doing an 18-hour fast every day.

With the lack of variety available in the jungle, my two meals there consisted of a soup plate of raw vegetable salad with a spoonful of veggie oil for dressing. Thus, I felt hungry a lot of the time, but persisted with that regime in pursuit of healing.

During the retreat, my weight dropped from a very skinny 60kg to a scrawny 56kg.

For much of the time, I found the encounters in Peru near intolerable. It was excruciating, far more than anything I had encountered (and I had undertaken some demanding programs in my life).

My first 10-day *Vipassana* meditation retreat (in total silence – body and mind-breaking days starting at 4 am and ending at 9 pm) was a gentle dawdle in the park by comparison.

For much of the 30 days, confined for most of each 24 hours to my small hut (isolated from the others by jungle), I stewed in the extreme distress of my ego, sweat, aches and pains.

Physically, I found most of my time very difficult, not ameliorated one bit by the unrelenting psychological challenges I faced for a good proportion of my stay. Each emotionally difficult, demanding day snailed by, punctuated towards the end by periods that transcended into the bliss and profundity of Possibility.

And so my time there was measured by the length and depth of my discomfort with occasional relief, and towards the end there were periods of un-medicated bliss. The daily brews of plant medicines ranged from delicious to decidedly unpleasant.

Plant medicines were administered daily by a non-English speaking Indian *shaman* called Edwin, or on some occasions by his trainee son, Christopher. The most potent plant medicines, the *ayahuasca* and *San Pedro* (unlike the others, both hallucinogenic), were given during nine arduously long and, for me, physically and often psychologically distressing ceremonies.

Small of stature and kind of disposition, Edwin was warm and engaging. He trained, was qualified and then practised as a nurse in a Western-style hospital, but he was raised from a very young age to become a traditional-plant medicine doctor. He left Western medicine to return to his roots. His son was in training and accompanied his dad each day, deeper into the jungle, to find the plants, prepare them and administer their extracts to the patients.

THE SACRED CEREMONIES

Only in the unknown do we truly see Possibility.

The six *ayahuasca* ceremonies, spread over the 30 days, started around nine or ten at night and concluded as late as six or seven the following morning. I was never in a fit state to check the end times. The three *San Pedro* ceremonies, also spread out, went from mid-afternoon and finished sometime early next morning. For me, the *ayahuasca* ceremonies touched the intolerable. The ceremonies with *San Pedro* were many degrees less intolerable.

At around 9.30 pm on the night of the first ceremony, each ‘patient’ was summoned by a messenger. I entered a large, ten-sided, two-level, thatched, rough-cut wooden *molaka*.

Being there was an adventure, to be sure. Little did I realise what it was going to entail ...

Everyone – patients, *shamans*, assistants, and the film crew – sat in silence, spaced evenly around the internal perimeter. Most of us had our backs leaning against the rough-hewn plank wall. Some sat cross-legged, some had their legs outstretched. Still others had their arms wrapped around their knees, hugged to their chest. Blankets separated us from the white-sand floor, brought in from a nearby river. It was a comfy, intriguing, even mystical start to proceedings.

Adding to the ambience was the soft light of many small candles carefully placed around the room, which were gently illuminating the expectant faces of us ‘newbies’.

With eyes closed, three *shamans* – Roman (the head and founder of the centre), Edwin, and one other whose name escapes me – together with their assistants, quietly chanted, warming us up for what was to follow.

The four-member documentary crew were intent on blending in and being an integral, non-intrusive part of the process while still attending to their jobs. They always seemed to achieve that.

Singing, chanting and making whistling, swishing and whooshing sounds with their breath, the *shamans* and their assistants led us into a state of calm and wondrous anticipation.

Not having experienced this 5000-year-old traditional Amazonian Indian ceremony, I was captivated by the ancient nature of the procedures and process. While the pretentiousness, affectation and organisational sophistication was absent, it reminded me of the mystery I sensed surrounding the Roman Catholic Masses of my boyhood.

After a span of unmeasured time, each person, including the film crew, was invited to go and sit in front of the head *shaman*. Roman was also squatting on the ground, and within the context of a one-on-one healing, each was invited to drink *ayahuasca* from a tiny, darkly stained wooden bowl.

This very personal part of the ceremony lasted some minutes and encompassed individualised chanting, whistling and blowing smoke onto the crown of the head of the patient before him. The segment closed with the *shaman* and patient leaning forward, grasping each other's upper arms and resting their foreheads together. Words of encouragement and any *insights* the *shaman* had regarding the person in front of him were whispered into the ear of the participant to end that element of the ceremony.

Much could be and probably has been written outlining the ancient history and intricacies of the *ayahuasca* ceremony. That is not my bailiwick.

Vile of smell and taste, I balanced on the edge of throwing up each time I drank this medicine, well before it had time to do what was intended, which in part was to make you vomit – but after a time lapse of at least an hour.

Although I recalled later that it was covered in my Skype interview, and in the legal documents I signed, the word *ayahuasca* had not registered with me, other than during a visit to my GP just before leaving for Peru. He had asked if *ayahuasca* was part of what I was embarking on. I said I didn't know, and he didn't elaborate.

I subsequently learnt that, apart from being a centrally important part of traditional South American Indian healing ceremonies, and believed to be of great benefit in purifying mind, body and spirit, it is quite commonly used by Westerners as a hallucinogen in assorted spiritual and other practices.

I hasten to repeat that the organisers had referred to *ayahuasca* and *San Pedro*, but neither meant anything to me at the time. Like most entrepreneurs starting on a new project, I was not very interested in the detail! I was simply willing to give whatever seemed like the thing to do a go.

All the candles were extinguished after the last person drank the *ayahuasca*, leaving us in the blackness of the *molaka*.

A short time after ingesting the *ayahuasca*, there can be (and usually is) a period of hallucinating. Although I understand that it's different for each person, feedback suggests that my experience was of a milder form. I saw vividly coloured stars in what appeared to be deep black space.

After a timeless time, this phase passes and for most, including the *shamans*, the purging begins (although seemingly milder for them). In the beginning, the vomiting and pooing was intensive for me – though a little less so with each subsequent ceremony.

As best as I can recall, and have read from my daily journal, I vomited and vomited and vomited during most ceremonies. In the early ones I threw up until there was nothing but a sickening dry retching as my body tried to rid itself of whatever it was trying to force out.

Each of us was supplied a bucket to catch the spew. If outside, seeking a latrine, we fertilised the ground. Intermittently, and at times simultaneously with those uncontrollable convulsions, I had seemingly ceaseless, diarrhoea-like bowel movements.

Aided only by the subdued red light of my headlamp (part of our required kit), I would shakily stand up, totter, stagger towards the wooden exit door in the pitch dark. Getting out into the black of a moonless jungle night took great effort in avoiding stepping on or tripping over fellow travellers in their own states of incapacity.

On reaching the outside I would continue to totter, stagger, stumble and often crawl, searching for an unoccupied primitive shithole. Sounds of purging from behind the hanging plastic sheet (acting as a door) indicated occupancy. Every shred of self-concern for what others might think was ripped and then scrapped from the bone of my ego.

During the early ceremonies, once outside I would sometimes collapse to the ground, feeling unable to move. Cajoled (a bit like a macho footy coach might) by one of the *shamans* to stand up and get to the lav, I would make what seemed like a super-human effort, and do so.

Oh what fun!

Once behind the plastic screen, I would perch precariously on a roughly cut, splinter-covered wooden surround, placed over a dark, stinking hole in the ground.

Split between vomiting and defecating, these periods continued throughout the night and into the early hours until my body could only squeeze out a smelly dribble from the nether region.

After the first ceremony, the memories of what was to follow utterly swamped my enjoyment of its early part. My living in the moment and *seeing what is* was tested and found wanting.

After the second ceremony, I was told by Roman the following day – when compos mentis enough to re-engage with another human – that the purging was taking place at the psychological and spiritual levels, as well as the physical. Be that as it may!

Dear reader, whatever you may think about the efficacy and wisdom of taking plant medicines and the healing practices of the *shaman* of the Peruvian Jungle, is up to you. I can only say that upon my return, my PSA count, the most commonly used test to assess how prostate cancer is progressing (apart from a biopsy), was down dramatically, to a level of five years earlier – and significantly below the marker for my age group.

Was I fully cured? No. But if I had stayed there for three months, which the *shamans* explained was the minimum time needed for healing a chronic illness, I may have been. Or I may have died. I suspect not, but I didn't have the will, strength or guts to take up the invitation to stay another 30 or 60 days, which they offered for free.

I attribute my dramatically lowered PSA reading to the time spent doing what I did – eating and drinking 99.9 percent of what I was given (I balked at the raw, unripe plantains), and the healing processes, ceremonies and plant medicines provided.

BREAKTHROUGH

Possibility is seen beyond the veil of our memory.

Much more happened during those 30 days than covered in this brief retrospective. What turned out to be ‘life-renewing’ for me was the breakthrough I experienced towards the end of the retreat.

It was on this quest that I *saw* Thought and Possibility in an intensely clarifying way.

I recognised that going on such an adventure, at my age, with my condition, was itself an expression of my psychological freedom to keep exploring the unknown.

Going on this exploration exemplified personal freedom from the shackles of socialisation and cultural upbringing. You may use terms like foolhardy, reckless, lacking common sense, etc. And, in retrospect, I think you’d have a valid point.

Although I didn’t enjoy or find most aspects of the experience easy, I saw and still see the process as natural and as normal as any other aspect of life and living. And although my description of my experience belies what I am about to say, I saw it as no big deal, as it was simply life unfolding as it always does, in whatever way it does.

More significantly, however, was that by stepping into the unknown, this once again enabled me to have a profound experience of Possibility. Through it I *saw* with deeper *insight* how bound up, wound up and hog-tied I still was, or had been until those new moments of revelation. I *saw* how deeply mired in convention, appearances, fear of difference and inauthenticity I still was.

I found fresh clarity around how we humans are innocent victims of our deeply conditioned perception of how life *is, should be, must be, has to be, and how others are, should be, must be and have to be.*

Among many other ‘truths’, racism, bigotry, nationalism and other still half-hidden beliefs, opinions and judgements of every hue were revealed for the illusions and falsehoods they are. Even the subtlest attachment to my preferences was *seen* as steel-reinforced concrete blockades to *seeing* Possibility.

With a clarity like that created by newly fitted windscreen wipers in a storm, I *saw* how our thinking alone prevents, or allows, heartfelt human connection and thus peace and harmony on Earth.

I *saw* how mere tolerance and acceptance did not go anywhere near far enough to bridge the river of imagined separation. In reality, both tolerance and acceptance echo the problem.

I *saw* that we – in a state of Possibility unconditionally and unreservedly – *see* the innocence in all humanity and embrace others of separate skin colour, culture and difference. I *realised* in that state that we cleanly jump our personally created mental divide, the imaginary, artificially made-up constructs that

separate one human being from another when *seeing* into that realm. We do so in a state of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

I can't say what specifically triggered my fresh *insights* into Possibility.

How or why it occurred is of no consequence.

What is, is that I *saw* that I did not know 'the truth' of anything; and nor, it appeared, did anyone else.

Of more relevance, I *saw* that there can be no such belief as knowing 'the truth' if we are to visit the realm of Possibility or live influenced by having *seen* Possibility – including any shred of belief in the concept of Possibility expressed in this guide. That is of this guide!

Confused, bewildered, fed up? Please persist.

My knowledge, beliefs, opinions and judgements suddenly assumed an obvious but benign role, rather than the camouflaged, over-riding sergeant-major role before that moment. They still emerge whenever I take my thinking seriously – as if I think I know 'the truth' of anything. Yes, anything!

Feeling isolated and wretched there in the jungle, I didn't enter a new level of knowing; I entered a new level of *not* knowing and, with it, a freedom that flooded my heart and mind with kindness and understanding. With greater clarity, I *saw* my own 'innocence' and the 'innocence' of all fellow humans, even those that are described as evil.

My *insights* into the notion of 'innocence' are expanded upon in the next chapter.

Suffice to say here, one of the most powerful revelations I took with me from Peru was a deep understanding of the words attributed to Jesus: 'Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do'.

This made absolute sense to me now.

WHEN WE *SEE* INNOCENCE, WHAT DO WE *SEE*?

At our core, each of us is innocent; it is our conditioned mind that makes it seem otherwise.

You may react to the term ‘innocence’ when expressed in the context of evil.

Until we understand the DNA of guilt and innocence, the concept of ‘everyone is innocent’ makes no sense. It flies in the face of everything we have been raised to believe.

I put to you that we are all innocent in that we do what we see to do – or *see* to do.

In a state of impossibility, we are thinking and feeling and acting in ways governed by our conditioned mind. If that conditioning has been imprinted by evil conditioning, we can act in evil ways.

That same mind (providing it is not damaged organically) is capable of *seeing* Possibility, experiencing renewal and moving forward as a new person in a state of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

We come back to the fact that we, you and I, act in accordance with our thinking and feelings, which are determined by our current level of awareness.

In a deep state of impossibility thinking, and having been conditioned in evil thoughts, feelings and behaviour (and without the benefit of a sufficiently high level of awareness), we are most likely, living within that personal reality, to perpetrate evil acts.

In a state of mild impossibility thinking and the mixed bag of conditioning most of us receive (and again without the benefit of a sufficiently high level of consciousness), our acts are not evil but may still be unkind, lacking understanding and wisdom, and short on common sense. This statement would be accurate for all of us some of the time, in some areas of our life.

At all levels of functioning within the state of impossibility thinking, we all are – including you and me – the innocent dupes of our degree of unconsciousness.

We may have committed a heinous act (and must face the consequences), but in committing it, what we did was all we could see to do at that point in time. We couldn’t *see*!

Consider the following, not uncommon, tragic example.

I learnt of Joe's life many years later when working with his eldest sibling, Nick.

Joe came into the world with an alcoholic mum and a heavy drinking, pot-smoking dad.

Mum was depressed and angry, her mind muddled by her addiction and her life-long-in-the-making victim mentality. Dad was emotionally AWOL, continued to work hard, smoked pot during the week, and wiped himself out on weekends with alcohol.

Fights, injury and visits to hospital emergency were common for the parents. They abused each other and regularly punished Joe and his two older siblings.

Periodically the children were fostered out. This occurred when the relevant agencies got involved after neighbours called the police when the violence and acrimony spilled onto the street, or the children's teachers saw evidence of physical abuse.

Being a handful, coupled with the preference of having children live with their biological parents, the kids were returned as soon as it appeared that some normality had resumed at home.

Delinquency, detention and banishment were par for Joe's schooling, which ended when he was fourteen.

Joe, who looked older than his tender age, then ran away and lived on the street. Drugs followed. Prostitution to feed his habit became his means of income, augmented with petty crime. His physical health deteriorated and any sense of himself as a decent human was eroded in a short amount of time.

At eighteen, he bashed a punter to death in a dispute over payment. Joe then died of self-inflicted injuries while in detention awaiting trial.

I am not excusing Joe, but consider his conditioning and his condition.

Was he responsible for his own path and his own actions? Of course he was.

Was he guilty of murder? Yes.

Should he have been put in jail? I think not.

In my world, putting him in jail was counterproductive, costly for the taxpayer, absolutely no deterrent against future crime, and of no use in Joe's rehabilitation.

He was guilty on all counts, but was actually 'innocent' in that he didn't *see* any alternative in his poorly conditioned and befuddled mind.

Punishment doesn't facilitate kindness, understanding, wisdom or common sense. You can punish some people into compliance, coerce some into obedience. And you can bully, force, strong-arm and intimidate others who pretend to go along. But you finish up with a mixture of dependent, broken, angry people looking to escape, get even or kill their oppressor.

Only the application of unconditional kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense can reach and facilitate a change of heart in the criminal mind.

Can *all* be reached in the way explained in this book? Hard to say, but the approach outlined has been the catalyst for the personal transformation of the most hardened criminals.

Is this understanding widespread? Not yet. And that is because our culture still offers retribution and punishment as the means of reforming criminals. Does that work? You know the answer to that.

So 'Saul on the road to Damascus' moments are consequently still not common. Probably the best-known example is George Foreman, the former heavyweight boxing champion. It is said that he was formerly a very nasty, cruel, hate-filled criminal being – the worst type of thug inside and outside the ring. My information is that today his life is one of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense, and he's a successful businessman to boot.

There are colleagues in the US working within the criminal-justice system facilitating the transformation of career criminals. Some are former criminals themselves. As the efficacy of their work becomes known, so too will this work spread. Dr Jack Pransky's book, *Modello: A Story of Hope for the Inner City and Beyond*, fleshes out what is possible in the toughest of disadvantaged communities.

The current reality is that how we treat law-breakers is certainly not working. Recidivism rates remain high; and many of those that don't end up back in jail still lead sad, lonely, unproductive lives.

This is why we all do what we do (as modest compared to Joe's transgressions as they may be) when lost in our conditioned thinking and thus disconnected from Possibility.

My point is: if we, you and I, could have *seen* a better option when committing unloving or antisocial behaviour, we would have taken it. If our thinking had been healthier (more aware and awake) in that moment, we would have acted in accordance with that healthier, more conscious thinking, and not have done whatever we did while in that poor state of mind.

Here's another example.

Jack, a 38-year-old on a stellar career path, with a five-year-old son and another unplanned baby boy due, had grossly overcommitted his family financially. He and Fran, his 34-year-old wife (who left financial matters to Jack) had taken out a massive mortgage eight years earlier.

They purchased a 'keeping up with the Jones' house – complete with four bedrooms, two bathrooms, home theatre and pool – in one of Perth's expensive beachside suburbs.

They funded their required minimum 20 percent deposit with a little of their own cash, some from her retired parents, the government's first homeowners' grant, and some created from a significant amount of additional credit-card debt. Wow – what a recipe for financial disaster!

Their mortgage broker fudged (with Jack's knowledge and help) their mortgage application by understating their liabilities and weekly cost of living, overstating their income and assets, and stating that the cash deposit was from their savings. Wow – again!

From the outset, it should have been clear to Jack and Fran (if either of them was *seeing* from the vantage point of Possibility, i.e. the potential for problems) that their chosen lifestyle and financial commitments were going to create solvency difficulties if:

- they had another child;
- a downturn occurred in the WA economy and the related commodities boom;
- there was a rise in interest rates.
- Or some other unexpected event such as:
 - a serious illness to either;
 - a serious illness to their child;
 - a loss of job to either.

Each of the above (or any event damaging to their income) would, with their high financial gearing, trigger financial distress.

With only one income, as large as it might be, to meet their 'out of control' cost of living, they were going to be in deep financial 'poo'. Their growing overheads would include private schooling for their son and the soon-to-be newborn.

Although both had been, by any standards, on big salaries for years, they hadn't saved anywhere near enough prior to Sam being born. Nor did they attempt to cut their costs when he went into day-care. And when Fran returned to her super-salaried job, they didn't save for unforeseen difficulties.

They continued to live high on the hog: fine dining, flash cars, expensive overseas holidays with Sam, and all the trappings of a high-income professional couple with one child.

What happened?

Unlike her first, Fran had complications with her second pregnancy. She had to go on maternity leave three months before her second child was born, compared to the two weeks before Sam was born.

Another challenge was that their second son, Phillip, had a heart defect. This required medical treatment and hospitalisation for an indeterminable time.

Spending as much as they were jointly earning for years, their finances had always been tight, with high credit-card limits making it easier to rack up further debt.

As they were both fit and robustly well, and they didn't intend to have another child, had great careers in big companies at the centre of a commodities boom, they thought life, as they saw it, would go on like that for ever.

As a result of this thinking, rather than make its payment a priority, they let their health insurance lapse.

It was clear to anyone with the eyes to *see* that on one salary, even with Fran on a generous 18-month maternity leave income; their cost of living would far exceed their income.

Not too long after Phillip was born, the proverbial hit the fan. Car payments on their BMW and Volvo could not be met, and both were in jeopardy of being repossessed. Jack managed for a few months to take out a second mortgage with a non-conventional high-interest lender to meet their house repayments.

He also accepted regular offers hitting his inbox from other institutions to open additional credit-card accounts, which he used to juggle payments on his and Fran's existing cards as well as the new ones. This became Jack's 'Ponzi scheme'.

Without going further into the details of how he tried to keep their sinking financial boat afloat, it is sufficient to say that the day of reckoning finally struck ... hard!

With a seriously sick son, an out-of-work wife now beyond the assistance of maternity leave and increasingly depressed, and their once-fairy-tale relationship cracking, Jack was beyond desperate.

Cutting to the chase, he was in a position where it was possible to embezzle a large sum of money. He did just that, got found out, and was subsequently jailed. They lost their home, cars and Sam's private schooling. Fran was hospitalised for a time and they subsequently divorced.

Fran, exceptional at what she did, retained and returned to her job. Her mum and dad helped out with childcare and some financial sustenance. She is pulling together the threads of her life in a rented home in a much, much lower-income suburb, with the input of some wise counselling and the support of true friends who stuck with her. She is undergoing renewal and regeneration.

As she still loves Jack, and now sees his ‘innocence’ as well as her own, Fran is reconsidering a future together once he is released from jail.

Given the foregoing, why would Fran see his innocence? Why would anyone? He was guilty of many things: at the very least, extreme foolishness, lacking basic common sense in handling his responsibilities, deceptiveness on several fronts, and then he committed a serious crime.

Although highly intelligent, hard-working, and a well-intentioned husband and father, Jack’s conditioning was such that he wanted everything now. His frustration tolerance was low – very low. He believed he was entitled to what he wanted NOW. In an age of easy credit, with banks falling over themselves to lend too much money to people like Jack and Fran, they were set on a path to financial hell.

Both were raised in very affluent times and conditioned by the prevailing culture of plenty, coupled with a sense of entitlement.

Jack’s various lenders also believed that the financial nirvana they had grown up in and had operated in for almost three decades would go on forever. His conditioning (beliefs, opinions and judgements – his worldview) was such that he was living in a personal reality, divorced from ‘*seeing what is*’. He could only see the good times rolling on. He lacked perspective. He was lost in the world of make-believe. He didn’t transcend that imaginary world, at least in his economic understanding, and *see* life from a higher vantage point – at the level of understanding, wisdom and common sense. He paid the price of that aspect of his ignorance.

On Fran’s suggestion, he started to speak with the counsellor she was seeing. He too is now waking up to a new reality – one tempered by a deeper understanding of life. He is growing in wisdom and starting to *see* both the ‘what if’ and ‘*what is*’ of life.

He is experiencing a belated but accelerated maturing in his common sense around what is really important in life and relationship.

He *sees* clearly what he has created, has accepted 100-percent responsibility for his actions (blaming no one in any way), and is committed to repaying what he owes to creditors and his former employer. One piece of good news was that, on the sale of their home, because of its desirable location and rising value since purchased, there was some equity left that met what the bank was owed and left a little over to meet a portion of their other debts.

Jack is hopeful that he, Fran and their two boys, can get a fresh start when he is released from jail.

Let’s not overlook the banks’, the mortgage brokers’ and the other lenders’ complicity and responsibility in Jack’s downfall. They were guilty of similar things to Jack, and they are ‘innocent’ in the same way Jack is.

I don't want to whitewash what Joe or Jack did, or evil or violent criminal acts or even simple rude or unkind acts, let me be clear: until we can *see* the core innocence in ourselves and in others, and understand that all human beings act in accordance with their state of consciousness for better or worse (either from a state of Possibility or impossibility), we remain black-and-white thinkers. We remain individually and collectively part of the problem humanity faces rather than part of the solution humanity desperately needs.

In understanding what is at cause within each of us to act in healthy and unhealthy ways, we can create an environment that fosters health and healing, and a world that draws upon the innate health in each other rather than drawing upon our learnt and, at least in part, unhealthy thinking. The only thing at cause is the invisible-till-it-becomes-visible source of our reality – our thinking.

'Innocence' is the most difficult of concepts for many I speak with to grasp. It is the one most questioned and balked at.

It is said that Jesus, as he was hanging there nailed to the cross, said: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

Did Jesus *see* the innocence in those that put him there? I suspect he did.

Love, understanding, wisdom and common sense flow through us to guide our daily lives if and when we open ourselves to the realm of Possibility. That opening occurs when we *see* 'that we think up our moment-to-moment reality'. It's as simple and as difficult to *see* as that.

There is no doing anything. No application of any technique. It is just an involuntary waking-up to the fact that we think up our personal reality – what we see or *see* in each moment.

Those of us who *see* beyond the habituated state of our mind and recognise and understand the states of other minds – *see* through our past, our stories, beliefs and judgements and those of others – come face to face with Possibility.

Those who don't face a future that will resemble their past.

Lost in our conditioning, our past will keep repeating itself, modifying little as we age. We remain closed to Life, accepting the facsimile constructed, believing it to be the genuine article.

In failing to *see* the simple but profound distinction between recycling our memories (our conditioned thinking) and original or fresh Thought (our inner world of Possibility and a fresh perspective), we remain among the blind and, by my definition, an innocent prisoner of our blindness.

We are blind in the sense that we don't know that we don't know. We are incarcerated in our self-created mental prison, guarded and controlled by our self-reinforcing, recycled thinking – our self-created living illusion.

Joe and Jack were guilty of what they did, but they were innocent in the sense that they could not *see*.

As Richard Lovelace writes in *To Althea, from Prison*, ‘Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage’.

Translated: our true prison is our beliefs, opinions and judgements – our imagined reality. The reality most of us live in, rather than the one we inhabit upon setting ourselves free from our illusion to *see what is* rather than what we believe it to be.

Remember, our individual (and our collective) level of consciousness is the degree to which we *see*, and are awake to or aware of our own creation – to our story about our life and the extent to which our life reflects Possibility or impossibility.

Where do you think wars are created? From a state of Possibility or impossibility?

Are we living our life or our collective lives through the impossibility of our stories? The answer, I suggest, is all that ails the world.

When we *see* that, we are on our way to creating a new future, and providing we continue to *see* that, we will create a sustainable future. In failing to *see* that, we continue to live in a world in which we remain at war with ourselves and, as a consequence, with each other.

Each of our many and various global challenges is simply a symptom of humanity living in a state of collective impossibility thinking.

The moment we *see* that we – you and me – are at cause in creating the world we live in, for better or for worse, we can simultaneously *see* our past missteps and discover new solutions that address the common good. Or, at the very least, we recognise solutions offered by others that do.

To *see* Possibility is to understand our innocence and to *see* in stark relief our previous blindness and that of others still blinded by their concrete thinking.

SEEING POSSIBILITY CAN OCCUR ANYTIME, ANY PLACE

'Ninety-nine hundredths or, possibly, nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths of our activity is purely automatic and habitual, from our rising in the morning to our lying down each night.'

William James

Our predicament in *seeing* Possibility is nicely expressed in the quote from William James.

Fortunately, there is a state of awareness beyond our conditioned reality to which we're mostly asleep.

Nothing we say or read about Possibility causes wakefulness; however, if and when the proverbial penny drops, anything can have pointed you towards it.

Syd Banks told certain stories he saw as important in conveying his message. On more than one occasion he relayed this particular story to me. Back in the 70s, while on holidays with his wife Barbara and her mother, he was walking along the water's edge with a friend on one of the islands off the west coast of Canada. It was on that occasion he *saw* in a profoundly deep way what I describe as Possibility.

For the benefit of any of Syd's students who might read this, I stress that Syd described his experience in our private conversations in very ordinary, simple terms. At those times he spoke only of Thought as the doorway to that deeper reality.

This is my recollection of what he told me on those occasions.

Syd said to me, 'I was walking with a friend along the beach and, as was my habit in those days, grumbling and complaining about my life, family and personal situation. I did that a lot – complain. I was a very different person back then. As I complained, my friend said, "Syd, it's just your thinking, and if you didn't think that way you would feel a lot happier". In that moment, for reasons I can't imagine, I *saw* that it was just my thinking that was at cause in my troubled and painful experience of life. I felt like shouting to him with relief, but responded with, "Do you realise what you have just said?" A little irritated, he responded, "Yes, of course. I said it is just your thinking and that's your problem." John, in that moment I *saw* how we create our moment-to-moment reality within our mind *with our thinking*. I knew I had discovered the secret to human happiness and peace on Earth.'

He then relayed to me what happened shortly after that revelation on the shore.

He said, ‘I returned to the cabin that Barb and I were renting, in a state of peace and contentment never experienced by me before. I walked in and said to Barb, “I’ve found the secret to life.” Barb looked at me and called me some names and then stormed off into the kitchen and started angrily telling her mother (who came on holidays with us and who didn’t like me much at that time) that not only was she married to an angry, unpleasant person, but that I had now lost my marbles to boot.

‘There was a fire warming the room. I bent down to put extra wood on it. I could hear Barb and her mum in the next room continuing to express their strong disapproval of me as a husband, son-in-law and human being. I started to laugh, as I was *seeing* their innocence and my own around what we had created in our relationships.

‘As I stood up, I looked out the window and had an even more amazing experience than the one on the beach. I *saw* a most beautiful, all-encompassing light. It was all I could *see*. My mind became clearer, even more so than earlier. I experienced the most beautiful of feelings flooding my being. For the next three days and nights I don’t recall sleeping, and it was as if the wisdom of the ages filled my mind over those three days and nights.

‘Although never a religious or spiritual person, I recognised that I had come to understand what the various religions were saying. I was a transformed human being. And it was so much so that on returning to work shortly after, my physical appearance had changed to such a degree that my work colleagues didn’t initially recognise me. “It’s me, Scottie,” I insisted.’

As intriguing as it might sound, I will go no further here with my memories of Syd’s story. There are others who knew him at the time of his experience and are best equipped to do that.

Is it exactly what Syd said to me? Of course not – it was over 28 years ago; however, as he repeated the story of his epiphany on several occasions, if not exact in detail, it is in principle.

You see, it is possible for any one of us, irrespective of our age, education, religious beliefs, personal circumstances or habits of thinking, to *see* what is keeping us stuck in misery and upset. Syd is an example of that. I am another.

Were any of my *insights* as profound as Syd’s? No – but they were profound enough to transform my life from struggle and torment to peace.

And I know many others who have *seen* the cause of their bother and become liberated.

Do I mean that you will never have an upset moment again?

Do I mean that you won’t revisit some of your less-than-helpful thinking?

Am I suggesting that you will walk on water?

Of course not!

It means that your habits lose their potency. Some will disappear forever. It means that you don't go as far down that road to misery or self-destruction. It means that you recover your bearings quicker. It means that you continue your awakening and quicken your fascination with Possibility, whatever that comes to mean to you.

It means that you will have woken up to the source of any disquiet you may have in your life. It will mean that you will have opened up to the source of creation and re-creation; the source of fresh ideas, fresh starts; renewal of your relationships; sustainability of your business or organisation and of the planet.

You will have woken up in a new reality – one of Possibility, in which you understand both it and impossibility.

And you will no longer measure yourself against others. You will no longer measure yourself against what you think you ought to be, or think you should be.

Suddenly you will allow yourself to be all that you can be, which is so much more than you think possible before your awakening.

Please reflect on what you have just read, and then read on ...

POSSIBILITY IS WAKING UP IN A NEW REALITY

Seeing the known as if for the first time is seeing Possibility.

What follows are some *insights* into what Possibility might and might not be, and where it might or might not be found – if indeed its location can be pinpointed. My intention is to stimulate you on your own quest. Possibility awaits each of us!

Seeing Possibility, at the most basic level to the more profound, can be like:

- having a fresh or original idea;
- seeing something or someone in a completely new and different light;
- seeing through the mystery of a koan;
- waking up in and to a new reality and experiencing a beautiful feeling;
- experiencing a revelation;
- having a profoundly transformational experience;
- becoming enlightened.

Seeing Possibility ranges from a simple *insight* to the most profound personal renewal.

All levels of *seeing* are available to each human being in a moment of complete abandonment of the known and surrendering to the unknown.

You may be familiar with the Japanese Zen teaching device in which a seemingly impossible riddle (a *koan*) is presented by the Zen master to his student. An example is, ‘You’ve heard the sound of two hands clapping. What is the sound of one hand clapping?’

If you stay with a koan, you will eventually (I suspect) break through and *see* its meaning. It may or may not result in the revelation that Syd Banks experienced, but you will be *seeing* something fresh as ‘the penny drops’. You’ll *see* something original or something you are familiar with in a completely unique way.

I heard that particular *koan* in the 50s, when I was eleven. It’s all I remember from a very funny long-playing vinyl record called *How To Live With Your Self or What To Do Until The Psychiatrist Comes* by an American psychologist turned comedian, Dr Murray Banks (no relation to Syd).

Something occurred several decades later, sitting on the floor of my home office, leaning against the wall, gazing out the French doors to the valley below. Wondering what I could usefully say at the rapidly approaching wedding of our eldest daughter, Lynley, I felt very stuck.

There was plenty that came to mind that I could say that would neither be useful nor supportive. My wife and I were both deeply concerned about the approaching marriage. That concern was overwhelming my thinking. The *koan* had come to mind many times over the intervening decades, but no penny had dropped. I had had no *insight* as to what it might mean.

After about an hour of mental struggle with what to say, out of the blue came an answer to that *koan*. Of course I don’t know to this day whether it was THE answer (nor have I looked up Google to see if my answer coincides with THE answer, if in fact one is listed) but it was a powerful and inspiring answer for me.

That answer became the central point of my speech.

You might like to ponder that *koan* for yourself: ‘You have heard the sounds of two hands clapping. *What is the sound of one hand clapping?*’

LIKE A *KOAN*,
THE WORDS IN THIS GUIDE POINT YOU BEYOND
WHAT WORDS CAN SAY

Discovering that you and I are not who we believe we are is at the heart of seeing Possibility.

Unlike a *koan*, my repetition may be the catalyst for some to *see* through and beyond the words and make the simple, essential leap into Possibility.

When that happens, it's as if a light has been turned on in a darkened room. And for those of you that have experienced a room or two (or more) being illuminated, there are many more rooms in our house to be lit. It seems that there might be no end to how many illuminated rooms we may have.

Maybe the entire house!

Maybe the house next door as well. Our suburb – nation – world!

Remember, the words written here are not presented as 'the truth'.

Perhaps you will find your mind and heart taking the leap into Possibility.

Memory, conditioning, our story or script, knowledge, beliefs, opinions and judgements can each be a substitute for a life lived inspired by Possibility.

All that we think we know presents and represents a reality that, prior to waking up, we're bound to experience as who we are, as us, as 'the truth'.

As long as we remain identified with our accumulation (in any shape or any form) we miss *seeing* Possibility.

The past is dead. It no longer exists – other than as a memory we carry through the illusion of time via Thought, appearing as reality whenever recalled.

Of course, we need memory to go about our daily life, but when we rely on it to tell us who we are, who others are, we miss the present moment. We fail to see *what is*. We miss *seeing* who we really are and who others truly are. We miss experiencing the deeper reality of Possibility and the love and understanding that floods our being in that state.

Yes, our conditioning is an aspect of the soil from which we grew to present ourselves to the world. Yes, our story is our story and our script is our script. But neither is one iota of who I am, who you are or who they are.

We're the one *behind* that illusory thinking, the one creating our reality in the present moment – as a manifestation of Thought. Yes, we *are the one behind* our *thinking* in each moment – our 'true or false self', Possibility or impossibility.

Discovering that we are not who we believe we are is at the heart of *seeing* Possibility.

Another aspect of why our memories and beliefs are less than helpful in creating a transformed future is that they're an inaccurate representation of the past.

Neuro-scientific research tells us that we embellish – add to, subtract from or give a different twist to – our past each time it is recalled. That is why I am at pains to let you know that my memory is fallible and what I am saying will not accurately represent what happened in the past. No person can. That too is often hard to embrace. We want to be right. To believe we have got it right, and that our memories represent 'the truth'.

As we grow up and age, without being aware of our memory's imprisoning limitations, we become reduced to re-creating, moment-to-moment, all of our yesterdays and fail to *see what is* in the ever-shifting moment.

Women and men having been sexually abused by their father (or others) can, and many do, come to identify – some for life – as that victim.

And some don't. I trust you will see why that is.

This story is about two sisters, one in her early twenties, and the other in her late twenties. Both were abused over several years as young girls.

On a friend's recommendation, a previous client of mine, the elder of the two, Janet, came to see me. She was carrying that early abuse as a burden. More relevant to her, which prompted her visit, was a recent development – something that didn't sit right with her.

She saw that the criminal charges being sought by her younger sister, Carol, against their father, while totally understandable and justified, would not remove the pain she and, to a greater degree, her sister had carried for all those years.

Carol was pressing hard for Janet to engage with her in the criminal proceedings. The pressure was growing as Carol became more and more determined to seek revenge and what she believed would give her satisfaction by bringing her father to justice.

Both, estranged from him for many years, had rebuilt, after much recrimination and upset, a relationship with their mother, who was long divorced from their father.

Janet saw that her father, now a friendless and sick 70-year-old, was not someone, notwithstanding his heinous behaviour, she wanted to see subjected to an investigation, court proceedings and probably jailed at his age and decrepit stage of life.

Also of deep concern to her was that revisiting the pain and ugliness of that episode would create great upset for their mother and their younger brother, who she felt close to and who had been shielded from his father's deviant behaviour.

She saw it would also create much upheaval for both her and her sister that wasn't apparent or was of no concern to Carol. And as that aspect of their family's past had been a well-held secret, the airing of it in court and the likely media publicity would rock their relationships with extended family, friends and work colleagues.

After a time and *seeing* the past for what it was, something that no longer existed, other than in our memory, Janet responded in a beautiful way. She came to *see* her father's innocence, notwithstanding his guilt and abhorrent behaviour toward her and her sister. She recognised that his sick thinking, and as a consequence his aberrant feelings and criminal and damaging behaviour, while they were in no way excusable, could be viewed with understanding.

What?

Yes, Janet realised that he was guilty of doing what he did, but he was doing what he saw to do in his warped, sick and distorted reality.

She decided to visit him, and had an emotionally healing experience in which her father wept and sought her forgiveness, which she gave without hesitation and unconditionally. Janet found freedom and gave her father her gift of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

Another wonderful outcome of her *seeing* Possibility was her ability to now sustain a healthy relationship with a male, which she hadn't been able to do in the past. Towards the end of the coaching process, she met a young man with whom she established a loving and intimate relationship. They then married and had a family.

Carol, on the other hand, felt badly let down and betrayed when Janet decided not to press charges or contribute to the case as a witness for the prosecution. Carol became more angry, bitter and distraught. She saw revenge and punishment as the answer to what ailed her.

Her psychological health was not supported by a counsellor that worked with sexually abused people. Her counsellor believed that taking Carol back into the past, raking over the gory and painful details and reliving those terrible experiences was the way to gain resolution. Carol, not long into that process, had a breakdown. Their father died without being charged and their mother passed a year later.

Janet, originally from Ireland, as was her new husband (whom she met at the Irish Club), decided to return there to get some clear air. Both their children were born there.

I received a card from her a few years later saying that they were very happy but had decided to return to Perth to raise their children and reconnect with her sister, brother, extended family and friends, and the sunny Western Australian lifestyle.

What did Janet discover that set her free? Three things:

She *saw* that what happened all those years ago was horrible. It was a heinous betrayal of trust. But while it was a reality back then, it no longer was today. It existed for her only as a bad memory and only if she revisited that memory, either involuntarily or intentionally.

Equally, she *saw* that she could keep recalling that memory and reliving it as it morphed and distorted into an even worse experience. She *saw* that she could feed that memory and become increasingly upset or she could understand her memories for what they were – something from the dead past that had no power over her other than the power she gave them.

Finally, she *saw* that even though she had been hanging onto it over the intervening years and that she had allowed the memory to interfere with her male relationships, she still had sufficient perspective to not have her thinking disable her life to the degree Carol's thinking had disabled hers. She came to understand the human condition and how personal freedom was found within, not by rearranging the deck chairs without. She *saw* that that was what Carol was doing in trying to find peace.

The story of Janet and Carol illustrates that as our thinking solidifies, we can atrophy psychologically, whereby our life manifests only our beliefs, opinions and judgements – derived from our accumulated yesterdays. Freshness, originality and creativity shrivel on the vine for lack of contact with Possibility and *seeing what is*. Carol was a more extreme case. Janet was much less so. Even before coming to see me, Janet was looking in the direction of a happier life.

Like Carol and Janet, we too can fall into our 'trap of story' and reaffirm and realign ourselves on a daily basis with what we believe is real. But 'our story' is at best, by comparison with what is possible, a withered, restricted and false reality. We don't *see* that we are seeing impossibility and are captive to that illusion.

Way too many men and women, even entire families, whole communities and large proportions of nations, live primarily in the past – memories, beliefs, opinions and judgements that pose in the individual and collective mind as certainty.

Gay or straight, right-wing, left-wing, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Australian, German or Chinese – they may be carnivore, omnivore or vegan. They may assert this belief, that belief, this identity, that identity. It makes not one bit of difference.

All *isms* are just assemblies of belief, opinion and judgement – all mental structures built and maintained by our false self.

If we now say, 'I believe what John's guide is saying', we are equally, totally lost.

Instead, look quietly within and observe what you are thinking and feeling. It is there where you will eventually *see* beyond your self-imposed incarceration of belief. That is where your freedom lies.

Our memories can be seductive, poignant and beautifully coloured – if inaccurate – reminders of the richness of life: past victories and defeats, long-past holidays, magic moments and adventures, emotional experiences shared. Equally, our memories can be like Carol's.

They remind us of our fallibility, failings and hurts, and of our courage, will to survive, successes and triumphs.

Our individual fall from grace occurs and continues to occur whenever we disconnect from our innate core of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense on which (using different words with similar meaning) every era of humanity has bestowed all manner of divine names and around which we have created religions.

While every human being starts out accepting the conventional beliefs of his or her culture, some manage to evolve past that and *see* Possibility.

OUR MEMORY HAS US FALSELY BELIEVING WE ‘KNOW’

*Possibility is seen in the mind of the innocent –
seldom, if ever, in the mind of the true believer.*

Are you still hanging in with me?

Those of you who have reached this point, please consider these further observations on our deep immersion in our imaginings, and our liberation from them – the single intention throughout this guide.

Our inbuilt susceptibility to becoming constricted and controlled by the mental boundaries of memory (our conditioned thinking) starts when we are born, maybe earlier.

As we grew, each new experience both influenced and was skewed by our developing worldview. All we saw, heard, felt, smelt, tasted and thought about was added to our internal narrative ... the story we became wedded to and identified with.

As each experience was collated and filed within our mind’s storage system, we became more and more lost in the thicket of those memories. We became more and more convinced that we knew ‘the truth’ of who we and they are.

We call the accumulated experiences by all sorts of names: upbringing, conditioning, learning, scripting, study, education, training, habituation, acclimatisation, inculcation, culturalisation and familiarisation. We call it ‘life experience’, ‘national identity’, even ‘self-realisation’ and ‘revelation’ – and much more.

Everything, even our most profound *insights*, is potential input to our growing blindness. The inherent trap in our accumulation of knowledge and information, even our past *insights*, and epiphanies, is that we innocently come to believe that we actually know ‘the truth’ of something – of anything!

Our conviction in our beliefs, opinions, judgements, lifelong experiences and, dare I say it again, in our most profound of revelations, or in our blind belief in the miracles of others’ revelations, makes it so. We are not conscious that our view of the world is formed and is being re-formed and reinforced by looking through the preconceived notions of our past. Layer upon layer ...

We are asleep to how our newest discovery, rather than facilitating us to *see what is*, becomes our newest ‘truth’. And that is because we don’t understand what is required to open again, again, and yet again to Possibility ... further opening to our innate faculty of awareness.

Even if having experienced an awakening to Possibility, it is blindingly easy to become lost in that memory. It’s so easy to slip from that level of awareness and once more to see life through that once-original thinking (but now the past and potentially impossibility) as, ‘This time I have found “the truth”.’

Ever our challenge is to be able to live in the peaceful and sustainable way felt so profoundly in that moment of awakening, and to continue in an ever-growing state of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

And make no mistake, this is the case even when – sometimes especially when – our conviction that we know ‘the truth’ is:

- based on a high IQ;
- an advanced education;
- decades of investigation and research;
- deep meditative practice;
- having experienced that beautiful feeling (simply from entering the realm of Possibility) and being told at that time that it was due to a direct connection with God, Allah, Universal Mind or our particular Saint or Sage.

And it can be even trickier still when our convictions are based on powerful personal revelation and *insight* – when we are certain that we have now found ‘the truth’. When those convictions are supported and reinforced by a close and intimate association with like-minded people, it can be doubly difficult to *see* because we innately desire to stay connected with others and belong to ‘the group’.

Even when our guru, whom we love and deeply respect, has been profoundly influenced by *seeing* Possibility, and they tell us that ‘this is the truth’, we can easily believe them and in doing so become lost in that belief. And we make excuses for them, thinking that they have been immunised against ‘smoking their own dope’.

For instance, when they behave in ways that are reminiscent of their past, we might say, ‘But they *see* life in a deeper, more clear and aware state than we mere mortals.’

If we think that, it is the beginning of the end. That is the start of ‘cultism’ and the sign of our ‘lostness’.

Our beliefs may be true for us or true for those in our field of association, but they are never, ever ‘the truth’, though they’re easily and eagerly taken to be so.

To live life in the belief that we possess ‘the truth’ (and I repeat once again that I include everything written in this guide or any other book as part of our ‘beliefs’) is, I suggest, living in a state of impossibility.

Yes, I am suggesting to you that we never really know ‘the truth’. We may get approximations to what are called physical facts, but anything that relies on our memories is distorted at best or completely incorrect at worst. I hope I am never called to be a witness in a trial that relies on my recollections of something in the past, or that my guilt or innocence depends on another’s memory.

And I stand by what is written here as being as true as my fallible memory allows. It is simply a way of expressing the little I have *seen* within the fountain of endless Possibility – the gift of *insight* that is accessible to all via a mind freed of ‘the truth’.

This guide is my sincere attempt to share with you my *insights* from within the realm of Possibility, both relaying the memories and *insights* from earlier experiences and also *seen* when writing this guide.

So how on the one hand can I say that our memories are unreliable and on the other expect you to take notice of mine?

I don’t.

All I ask is that you use this material as a guide, pointing you towards Possibility and what is available to you within that realm, which will, to whatever degree, transform your life.

Equally, all you have read could become a medium for reinforcing existing, or for becoming lost in new belief, opinion, judgement, dogma and impossibility. I have seen this happen time and time again.

And I have seen a student touched by what they are hearing or reading and then touched even more deeply by an *insight* or revelation. Their mind has cleared; they experience a beautiful feeling and a buoyancy and lightness never known to them before. And they realise that what is occurring is within their mind and has nothing to do with their guru, and that their experience is normal and natural and available to anyone whose mind clears from the imaginings they live in.

My point is that, while not lying or wanting to mislead you, if you take anything that I say as ‘the truth’, you will fail to *see* the central – actually the only – point of this offering.

Possibility is not ‘the truth’, something fossilised that can be held onto. I am simply pointing towards clarity, Possibility and renewal.

I am pointing you towards your freedom from belief and your need to believe.

SOME POPULAR MENTAL-TRAINING MODELS AND POSSIBILITY

Techniques based upon re-programming our subconscious mind (an aspect of memory) keep us mired in additional conditioning.

Our number-one habit is being stuck in habitual thinking. This extends to mental-training models – even ones intended to liberate us from bad habits of thinking.

This guide isn't about receiving more training, although some un-training (as in the Realm of Possibility Workshop outlined in Appendix Two) can assist, so long as it doesn't end up creating more habitual thinking.

There are important distinctions between Possibility and some popular forms of mind work.

First and foremost, Possibility *isn't positive thinking*. Thinking positively, or better put, clear and inspired thinking will automatically *result* from *seeing* Possibility.

Seeing Possibility is unlikely to occur when intentionally practising positive-thinking techniques.

Possibility is *seen* in a state of awareness and is not evoked by a technique. That state is experienced throughout one's being. In that realm, we experience extraordinary clarity, a sense of deep calm and an unshakable positivity around whatever original or fresh view is *seen* – even if what is *seen* foretells trouble or even destruction ahead.

Within the Realm of Possibility we can *see* creation and, equally, destruction, things improving or things going 'to hell in a handbasket'.

Yet, whichever one we *see*, the same mental freedom, clarity and calm exist. We *see* destruction with the same clarity as we *see* creation. Clarity of thinking around every aspect of our daily life results from *seeing* Possibility.

PRACTISING POSITIVE THINKING TAKES EFFORT

Positive thinking is promoted by those that haven't experienced Possibility, or those that don't understand what it is when they have.

As it is usually described, positive thinking is a process for, and a result of, trying to train or discipline our mind to think more positively.

At best, it is the impetus for a change in our conditioning, a change from some habitual negative or less-than-helpful thought patterns. That can be all well and good, but it is still not transformation. At best it is reprogramming – developing different, what is intended to be better habitual thinking. This can be extremely useful in increasing our competence in areas where we need to hone a specific skill.

Seeing Possibility, however, is the antithesis of training. It enables us to *see* our programming for what it is. We are no longer wedded to our thinking, positive or otherwise.

Positive thinking has, in my observations, limited staying power. You will always need to be 'working on it' to sustain your positive momentum.

Nor, as far as I understand them, are techniques like NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming), affirmation, creative visualisation, prayer, or any of the other models and processes being offered for self-improvement related to Possibility.

Techniques based upon re-programming our subconscious mind (which is an aspect of memory) keep the individual mired in additional conditioning.

We already have enough overly conditioned, programmed, layered beliefs to *see* through if we're to experience a state of fresh Thought. Does adding further layers make sense?

From extensive reading, experimentation and training in NLP, affirmation and visualisation during my 30s and early 40s – and from having been a one-time trainer in them – my understanding is that these processes are about imprinting ideas into our subconscious mind through various techniques, including ongoing repetition. They are about embedding ideas in our memory, creating a pattern of thinking that supplants, overrides, improves or changes the existing ones. Each is a form of conditioning, the very aspect of our mental state beyond which we need to *see* to experience Possibility. While improved conditioning it may be, it is still mental stuff that blocks *seeing* Possibility.

But let me strongly qualify what I am saying here about NLP, visualisation or any other similar technique you might be familiar with. Many elite athletes and performers of all types use those techniques to improve their skills and hone their performance. Correctly applied, they will improve skill and technique, and embed important habits that will benefit performance.

These techniques will help greatly, for example, in playing the piano really well – maybe to concert level. But when it comes to composing an original piece of music, except for providing the technical platform, all learning is subordinate to fresh Thought; it is fresh, original Thought that creates the new melody, lyrics, and musical interpretation.

Memory provides our predisposition to certain music and enables us to put it on paper and recall it as needed. Possibility is the source of an ‘original score’.

Seeing Possibility is *seeing* beyond our memories, beyond our subconscious and the accumulations of our lifetime. It’s hearing beyond the last melody we created to be able to access a new one. It is *seeing* an entirely new (never even considered) use for an old product, or building, or organisation, or skill set.

While these training-based approaches have many advocates, practitioners and students worldwide, none of them are aligned, as far as I can *see*, with *seeing* Possibility, creativity and originality.

Seeing Possibility is not a technique, it is not a skill, it cannot be learned. It is a naturally occurring function of being human, available to any mind that in the moment is willing to be free of the past to *see*. It occurs in a mind that can observe itself thinking and not taking that thinking as ‘the truth’.

SOMETIMES SHATTERING, ALWAYS LIBERATING

'I almost think we're all of us Ghosts ... It's not only what we have invited from our father and mother that walks in us. It's all sorts of dead ideas, and lifeless old beliefs, and so forth. They have no vitality, but they cling to us all the same, and we can't get rid of them. Whenever I take up a newspaper, I seem to see Ghosts gliding between the lines. There must be Ghosts all the country over, as thick as the sand and the sea. And then we are, one and all, so pitifully afraid of the light.'

Henrik Ibsen

Until we awaken to the reality that, mostly, we see life through the pinhole of our past, we miss experiencing fresh Thought and its resultant *insights* into the unlimited realm of Possibility. We miss *seeing* the illusory nature of our lifelong personal 'truth of the matter'.

The weight of detail and circumstance of our life, however horrendous or happy, could have sealed our mind over the years, making it less permeable to the transformative power of fresh Thought.

Is such conditioning still in the way of your personal liberation and renewal?

It is perhaps time to consider that if we human beings could actually create a sustainable world out of the accumulated past, surely we would have done so by now? Maybe Aldous Huxley hit the nail on the head when he said: 'That men do not learn very much from the lessons of history is the most important of all the lessons that history has to teach'.

Transformative discoveries and a transformed world come from *seeing* and continuing to regularly *see* Possibility and manifesting the new ways forward that are *seen*.

To be unaware that we (at our worst) can live day to day, re-creating our past as a psychological zombie, one of the living dead, or to wake up to Possibility and to be fully alive.

SEEING WHAT IS

Being present to 'what is', is creating our life and relationships afresh.

Seeing what is, is the state of awareness that comes with the willingness to lay aside all of our 'sacred cows' – and yes, that one too, the one that may have just come to mind; the one you're certain is 'the truth'.

That's the single point most difficult to *see* past.

There are no exceptions to what we need to let go of, which especially includes our ideas around Possibility.

We don't let go and *see what is* easily, because we are comforted, or feel safe and secure when others agree with our political, religious, racial, societal, psychological or philosophical views.

When someone disagrees with our view it's a burr under our saddle. We feel unsafe, insecure, fearful and reactive.

That's why we engage with those who agree with us, those who ride easy in the saddle with us – and yes, those that collude with us.

And typically, we disengage from those who don't agree with us.

But we fail to see how limited, confined and self-confirming our life is when we only befriend and listen to like-minded people.

We fail to *see* how enslaved by our beliefs and preferences we are. And how locked into the impossibility of *seeing* beyond our stereotypical view and to recognise how polished, embalmed and fossilised our perspective on life really is.

In our innocence (we are all innocent victims of our own thinking), seeing only what it is we think is 'the truth', we continue to agree and disagree with others, to curry favour or fight with them, while failing to *see* that both positions lie in impossibility.

Agreeing and disagreeing is taking a position based on the past. Both rely on what we have learnt to believe is right or wrong for us and others. Yes, the stimulation of debate around shared or conflicting ideas exercises our mental muscles and, at best, stretches us at times to concede that another may have a point.

Communion with others enthralls us – we are social creatures. But for much of the time, the past – our accumulated, stored-in-memory ‘positions’ – distracts us from an increasingly broader and inclusive view of life.

Few of us question what we have been raised and educated to believe to be true, or even to question what we’ve *seen* in the most profound of our revelations. We habitually see people and circumstances as either ‘right or wrong’ or ‘good or evil’. We hold firmly to beliefs such as ‘There is a God’; ‘There is no God’; ‘Humankind is contributing or not contributing to climate change’; ‘I am right’; ‘You are wrong’; ‘They are right’; ‘They are wrong’; ‘This really is the way it is.’

Released from judgement, opinion and belief, we simply *see what is*. Our dogma is laid bare before our eyes. Our lifetime reality is rinsed away as if removed by the purest water. Our existing worldview is left naked for us to *see*.

We come to a place free from all explanation and attribution of meaning; a place where we *see* solutions to what ails us. Beyond that, we *see* answers to what troubles humanity. We *see* ways forward that are tempered by kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense. We *see* resolution free of coercion and imposition. Most importantly, we *see* results that are sustainable.

Within the state of fresh Thought, we simply *see* what to do, the next step to take. There are no injunctions from the past and none of the confusion and conflict they create. There is no choice! No second-guessing! No fear! There is only the next step we *see* to take. We *see* the obvious, the way forward. That is because we *see what is*.

We *see what is* at the level of Possibility. We *see* that ideas, which will serve the common good, come from all facets of the matrix.

Take our parliamentary system, for example. Consider how our parliamentary system might work if parliamentarians listened and responded from the realm of Possibility.

For example, the Leader of the Opposition might express an idea that he thinks matters and will work, will benefit the common good.

The Prime Minister listens carefully to what is being said. She responds by saying, ‘That’s an interesting idea, Bob, please expand on it a little.’

The Opposition Leader then expands on his idea.

The Prime Minister responds again, saying, ‘I think that what you’re suggesting has merit. I’m not clear how we might fund and implement the idea or how we might manage some of the inherent dangers I see if the idea backfires, but I am keen to explore it with you. Let’s get together with my minister and your shadow minister for a separate conversation. Are you up for that?’

You may think this is impossible.

Well, of course it is, so long as we think it is.

But what if listening and responding with kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense replaced the impossibility mindsets that currently inhabit our parliaments?

What if the confrontational, belittling way that much of our parliamentary dialogue is cast gave way to responsive, respectful, thoughtful dialogue?

Pollyanna-ish!

Impractical!

Off with the fairies!

Will never happen!

Impossible!

Well yes, of course all of the above are true in a state of impossibility thinking. It is unthinkable that respectful dialogue could, let alone would, happen – right up until the moment one of our leaders *sees* from a state of Possibility with sufficient clarity and lives and breathes their daily work from that understanding, if not from being in that state all the time.

There are people of good intentions, great ideas and a desire to serve the common good in every party. It takes only one mind to clear from belief, opinion and judgement for transformation to occur. It is at that moment that conscious leadership leads the way forward.

ALLAN HELPS WILLIAM SEE

'There are none so blind as those who will not see.'

John Heywood

Seeing our conditioned thinking for the slippery customer it is is our number-one challenge and our most precious reward.

Many years ago, a powerful example of how we get trapped in the maze of our thinking was brought home to me when a colleague related a story about a senior and critically important member of a large law firm.

Allan had been called in by the firm's managing partner to assist in resolving difficulties with a key partner, William, who was a gifted and brilliant lawyer in a highly specialised area of corporate law. He was recognised nationally as the pre-eminent person in his field.

The problem was that William had increasingly dire relations with the partners he regularly came in contact with. Even the support staff dreaded working with him. Morale was rock bottom, and the turnover rate of his immediate subordinates was high and unsustainable.

To compound the difficulties, which seemingly were beyond salvaging by the time Allan became involved, the firm's largest fee-paying client (who was linked in business to several clients introduced by them) saw itself as dependent on the extraordinary quality of William's work. So William's leaving would create a cascading loss of partners and clients.

Everyone in the law firm conceded that William's work was nothing short of remarkable. Sacking him was a frightening option. Having more partners leave (two already had), along with some of their staff and clients, would be equally devastating to the firm. And newcomers were even less likely to tolerate William's increasingly dysfunctional behaviour.

William reluctantly agreed to meet with Allan out of deference to Megan, the HR Director. She was new to the firm and one of the few with whom William still managed to have semi-civil relations. And in the light of the personal inconveniences he was experiencing with the rapid-fire attrition of his staff, his back was to the wall.

Megan was familiar with Allan's work; she had participated in some programs with him on Possibility some years before, and she reckoned that only someone with Allan's understanding of how people in distress function had any chance of reaching William and being a catalyst for transforming the unmitigated mess in which the company found itself.

From William's perspective, the problems were clear-cut. They were a direct result of everyone else's incompetence bordering on stupidity.

In William's first meeting with Allan, he challenged Allan's competence and made it blatantly clear that he strongly doubted Allan would bring any value.

It came as no surprise to Allan when he heard William's assessment as to whether he was capable of addressing the issues. William asked things like, 'What size law firms have you worked with?' And more specifically, 'How many partners, associates and support staff did those firms have?' He also asked, 'What type of law did they practise and what type of clients did they work with?'

William believed that, unless there was a very close match, Allan would not be capable of working with him or the firm. As it was, Allan had not worked with a law firm remotely like the one William worked for.

When Allan put forward an accounting practice he had worked with that had roughly the same structure, numbers and clients with similar profiles, William was adamant that no parallels could be made between law and accounting firms. They were, according to William, like the proverbial chalk and cheese. He believed you could not generalise about companies, their people and their circumstances. Experience, in his reality, wasn't portable and couldn't be generalised.

He is a great example of how our memory of the past is used to obscure our thinking in the present. For William, the specific technical knowledge one learns is the only knowledge of value. He couldn't *see what is*, or even imagine that others could *see* it either.

But with gentle coaching, Possibility reveals itself to most people, if not all.

Bit by bit, over some months, Allan helped William calm, established rapport with him, and helped him find a way through the density of his thinking (using the process described in Appendix One).

Allan wasn't thrown by William's brilliant mind and boxed-in thinking. Neither was he reactive against it. With this neutrality, coupled with his kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense, he was able to point a way forward. Or rather, Possibility revealed itself to William, as it always will if given a chance.

With a calming mind, William started to experience some critical *insights*. He began to recognise his beliefs, opinions and judgements, and *saw* how these were driving his feelings and behaviour.

Those around William were helped as well. Conditions improved, especially when Allan was invited to work with William's peers and the support staff around Thought, Possibility and impossibility. A new level of understanding was experienced between them all, and it was *seen* by many individuals within the group. This new understanding laid the foundation for a lasting solution.

William, as was suspected by Megan, was diagnosed with a very mild form of Asperger's Syndrome that had become extremely problematic as his client load increased and he became increasingly busy-minded, stressed, anxious and obsessive.

This threw fresh light on the challenges he faced and those his colleagues faced in relating and working with him in a responsive rather than reactive way.

I have been intrigued to find this deeply ingrained thinking (minus the added weight of Asperger's Syndrome) to be common in groups and individuals I have worked with.

Rigid, conditioned thinking – even extremely disordered thinking, as in William's case – places others and us in boxes that are difficult to *see* into or out of. Yet Possibility is available to everyone even in the direst situations (unless brain-damaged beyond normal functioning).

When we're stuck in our beliefs, we imagine that only others just like us can relate to our problems, challenges and ways of looking at life.

'Just like us' includes factors as diverse as upbringing, specific training and employment status, the type and size of the organisation, political inclinations, religion and more. It's difficult for us, given our life-long conditioning, to recognise that fundamentally we are all the same – each a product of what is going on in our mind.

Seeing or not seeing that we create our reality moment by moment via our thinking is all that separates us from peace and harmony – or upset and frustration. *Seeing* that we think enables us to live in a state of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense. Failing to *see* precludes us from doing so.

WE'RE ALL A BIT LIKE WILLIAM

*If you imagine you are different or special,
you are not seeing what is.*

When experiencing life in the restricted way William did (and we all do, to a greater or lesser degree), we're dead certain that the circumstances of our life determine the way we see and experience the world. We don't *see* that Thought in each new moment enables our very existence and it alone determines whether we live from Possibility or impossibility.

But just as it was for him, it's difficult for each of us to *see* our own entrenched views, as well as our reactivity to circumstances, and commitment to the personal reality we know and experience to be 'the truth'.

At this moment you may be having an increasingly strong reaction to what I have been saying. You might feel like telling me a thing or two, or consigning this guide to the rubbish bin. You may be sick and tired of hearing me say the same thing over and over again.

'Yes,' you may be crying out.

Are you thinking:

- 'I know what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil.'
- 'Daily I read the Bible, Koran, Bhagavad Gita.'
- 'I pray to Jesus, Allah, Universal Intelligence.'
- 'I have been raised to know the difference between justice and injustice.'
- 'I have learnt the deeper truths about life.'
- 'I have read more, better or different books, guides or writings.'?

If any of this relates to you, as it does to me, we are simply being human.

Our reactions at such times come from our *unseen*, unrecognised certainties: invisible beliefs that we are certain are 'inviolable truths'. And, as such, we don't like them violated.

Our emotional reactivity (a sure sign we are lost in impossibility) when a new idea clashes with our pre-existing worldview can be intense. We feel uncomfortable, at sea, sometimes enraged. We resist and make the new idea wrong. We have a need for certainty – the certainty of our 'truth'.

Though it can be shattering, it's always liberating when, after investing a lifetime holding certain beliefs, we *see* them from a higher vantage point – a place of greater awareness.

It's not a matter of throwing out beliefs. We can't while we still believe them. What happens to a belief we've *seen* through is that it 'abandons us'.

WHAT ABOUT THOSE BELIEFS?

We only imagine that we have beliefs. It's them that have us.

Evil emanates from a mind that is temporarily (sometimes, it seems, permanently) disconnected from our core state of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense. Separated from our innate human decency by dysfunctional, even psychopathic or sociopathic thinking we are lost, at that time, to Possibility.

Fortunately, most of us are not disconnected. We are innocently asleep, unaware of the source of our experience. We're not conscious of the fact that we think up our experience, and how we construct our reality in each moment either blinded by our past, or *seeing* afresh from the wellspring of original Thought.

In one state, we use the precious gift of Thought poorly and will experience the consequences in some form or another.

In the other, we occupy a state of awareness without limits. And it's important to understand we have the capacity for both, as well as a full range in between.

And we are each capable of making up anything in our mind – of believing in anything or anyone. We have the gift of Thought with which to do so. Our level of awareness determines whether we *see* that we are the thinker, the maker-upper, the sole creator of our reality – or we imagine that it is the external world of circumstance, or whatever we imagine, that is creating and manipulating it.

Much of what we consider bad or evil is considered right or good in another culture. It is our blindness to our conditioning, our self-washed brain that has us judging others as good or bad, right or wrong, polite or impolite, acceptable or unacceptable, meeting our standards or failing to meet them.

Simply *seeing what is* (which is *seeing* through our conditioning, beliefs, opinions and judgements) is freedom – freedom to engage with others in kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

Once we *see* and understand how to access Possibility, we are able to utilise the gift of Thought for creating sustainable relationships and a sustainable world. To the extent that we don't do this, we create the opposite.

GETTING A FRESH START

Seeing Possibility is the key to unlocking a fresh start.

Sometimes I'm contacted by clients overwhelmed by their persistent, distressed thinking.

What they have on their minds is their thinking about life, and more specifically their own life, and what's wrong with it. They have become lost in their story. They see little that's hopeful or possible in living. They feel down, despondent and depressed.

Like the rest of this guide, this is about getting and then sustaining a fresh start.

Some of the questions during our second, if not first, conversation might be:

- Would you like a fresh start?
- What do you understand by 'getting a fresh start'?
- If it were possible, are you willing to make a fresh start?

It makes sense for the client to establish our purpose in getting together – and for them to clarify a vision for their future.

Most are unclear as to what is meant by 'a fresh start'.

Most think that 'a fresh start' is to escape from their current circumstances – leave their job or spouse; move to a new home; shift to a new state; migrate to a different country; win Lotto, etc. etc.

So first we explore what getting 'a fresh start' is, and what it is not.

This type of delving is for the client to realise that, although we may change jobs, leave our partner, move home, state or county, win Lotto, none of this is likely to make one bit of difference after the 'honeymoon period' has passed. If we don't wake up to the fundamental cause of our disquiet, our way of thinking, life will continue to be a painful experience for us.

More specifically, unless we wake up to how we habitually think in certain ways, we will take that thinking (the way we usually see our life circumstances and those in it) with us wherever we go. We cannot out-run our thinking.

Even if we change our circumstances, very soon after, we will re-create our customary way of seeing life: that is, from our hopeless, despairing stance, one where we think our needs and expectations are not met and life is not worth living.

At some point during the coaching process, if it is their intention, clients come to *see* that a fresh start occurs when we *see* life differently, feel differently and act differently, even though our circumstances may not have changed.

I say ‘if it is their intention’ because some of us seem to prefer being right to being happy. Moaning and complaining have become a way of life – after all, as they see life, there’s much to moan and complain about.

They’ve yet to *see* that, for us to *see* life differently, we need to *see* the fundamental source of our difficulty, which is our failure to *see* our entrenched thinking.

My challenge is to point them in the direction of *seeing* Possibility to *see* what’s at cause in their creating the very experience they are trying to escape from, to *see* the origin of their misery, gloom and despondency.

And for them to discover that their misery isn’t to do with their partner, boss, neighbours, financial situation, health or any other condition or situation they don’t like or are afraid of.

For them to *see* that their circumstances *are not* the cause of how they think, feel and behave.

David was a case in point.

DAVID *SAW* POSSIBILITY AND GOT A FRESH START

Recognise that we either see life through the imaginings of our past, or see life free from all such attribution of meaning and thus get a fresh start.

David was one of four good friends. Over a period of four years, each of them came to have a series of one-on-one conversations with me.

All four had been friends since high school. The first of them was referred by an associate of his, a previous client of mine. In turn, he recommended the second friend, and the second recommended the third. Finally, the three cajoled David into making an appointment.

The first three owned a business, and each was very successful in that world.

David worked as store manager for a company selling safes. He had been there for 20 years. He was good at his job and often talked to his friends about going out on his own. But in spite of his desire and their encouragement, he lacked the confidence to take that step.

Concerned by the way the business was being run since being taken over by the founder's son, David was nevertheless unwilling to speak up. He felt frustrated and trapped.

His discontent didn't end there. Unlike the other three, he was renting his apartment. Although he wanted to get a place of his own, he was afraid to do so.

Of more concern to him was his lack of a female relationship. Being shy and feeling awkward, he found it difficult to get a date and, even when he was set up with one by his well-intentioned mates or their partners, it seldom proceeded beyond the first date.

Apart from his three close friends (who had families, other friends and full lives) and limited contact with his family, David was quite isolated, and frequently felt lonely. The four friends, other than for special occasions, now only got together to play golf on Saturday mornings and hang out together for a while after the game. David was very good at golf, which was the primary reason he was still a part of the group.

What finally prompted him to see me was his growing use of marijuana on weeknights, and his new habit of snorting cocaine on weekends that had started with one of the mates. It was this mate who had initially introduced him to drugs but who had recently given them up.

It didn't take David long to *see* that he really did want a fresh start in life and that it was within his power to get one.

He *saw* that he only needed to get out of his habitual way of *seeing* life to do that. He became highly motivated and open to viewing his life and circumstances in a new way.

During our conversations, he started to have *insights*, and more importantly, he had them between our conversations. After four months he quit the drugs. This, he told me with some satisfaction, was something he thought he would never want to do, let alone be able to do.

He found the beautiful feeling when his head cleared naturally to be sufficient to satisfy his need for a feeling of inner peace and goodwill towards himself and others.

Next, he asked a woman, whom he had been admiring since she moved into his apartment block, for a date. This blossomed into a long-term relationship.

He also discovered that he was the problem, not his boss or workplace, in how he had been thinking and feeling. Even though he was now happy at work, he still held the dream of striking out on his own.

Renting a small shop, he took on a line of commercial and residential safes, taking his budding business from strength to strength.

After 18 months he was replete and no longer felt the need for our conversations.

About two years later he called. He had married (not to the person in his apartment block), and was extremely happy living in their recently purchased home and expecting a child. Business was going very well, life couldn't be better. He was feeling grateful for having created and sustained a fresh start.

It was through David's *seeing* Possibility that his transformation occurred. He had created a new relationship with life. *David didn't change. David transformed* – and thus experienced a sustainable fresh start.

To assist David to *see* Possibility was my only job. He did the rest.

MY ONLY JOB AS COACH

At a certain level of consciousness, we see that our experience – our reality – is not determined by the external world but rather by the quality of our thinking.

As with David, my aim for each client is that they *see* beyond the story they have created around their life, which blinds them to *seeing* Possibility and a fresh start.

Suppose for a moment that we have arrangements to go out with friends for dinner. Everything is set. The restaurant comes highly recommended, and we are very much looking forward to the experience. Our friends are relatively new ones. We have clicked with them and are looking forward to catching up. We're filled with expectation.

Just before we walk out the door the phone rings. It's the husband, and he cancels, saying he's sorry and will get back to us. There is no further explanation as to why they are cancelling.

We may say, 'Why is this happening? Don't they want to be friends with us?'

We may go further and think, 'We are unpopular as a couple.'

That, or something similar, would be our story. That's how we can make ourselves feel miserable.

To get a fresh start, we need to *see what is*. To do that would be to *see* that they have cancelled. That's it! No attribution of meaning as to why.

In doing so, we have let go of our story (as it no longer has relevance to us) about ourselves and the attribution of meaning we once gave to their cancellation. We have the simple recognition that we won't be going with them to the restaurant this evening – no more, no less.

Rather than being blinded by our story or collective stories as a couple, we *see* with neutrality and create the possibility of a fresh start. Our options for a fresh start in that moment, uncontaminated by impossibility thinking, are numerous.

I understand that to *see* life in the way I have just described can be hard for us. And that's because we have a life-long habit of seeing life through our story.

Our story obscures how simple life really is without it.

As repeatedly pointed out, you and I need to understand, at a gut level, that *all experience* is created within our mind – via Thought. And that how we see – or *see* – our experience is determined by our current level of awareness.

Our worldview is determined by the degree to which we are aware of the inside-out nature of our experience. To be aware whether we are seeing life through our imaginings or *seeing* the bare bones of *what is*.

The cancellation of our dinner arrangement has nothing to do with us feeling dissatisfied.

Our disappointment has everything to do with *us wanting life to be other than how it is right now*. Our friends have cancelled, and in asking, ‘Why is this happening?’, we have stepped into our story.

Our story comes from some earlier conditioning – perhaps of thinking we were unlovable. Perhaps some other idea we took on as ‘the truth’. Whatever the memory, it has placed useless limitations on the way we see that and similar situations. We automatically see that there is something wrong with us rather than *seeing what is*.

For unless we are able to see the distinction between our memories (our beliefs and assumptions around life) and the new start offered by fresh Thought, we remain unconscious of Possibility. We are unable to create the life or relationships of our fondest dreams.

To *see* the distinction between creating our experience from our imaginings and *creating afresh* in each shifting moment requires a movement in our consciousness. It’s that shift in our awareness to *seeing* life from the realm of Possibility that wakes us up to how we are creating our reality moment-to-moment. It’s precisely at that moment we get a fresh start.

BEING WILLING TO GET A FRESH START

Possibility manifests in our experience as a profoundly beautiful feeling, a feeling that embraces, without exception, all of humanity, all aspects of life.

Being willing to get a fresh start means being willing to *see* that all our opinions and everything we believe is just that – an opinion, a belief.

To get a fresh start requires us to *see* that our beliefs and opinions are not ‘the truth’, however compelling our ideas appear to be.

To *see* through or beyond our views, or the views of family, friends, colleagues, scientists, theologians, philosophers, theosophists, psychologists and all other eminent thinkers in the world, is to *see* that what they or we say is not ‘the truth’. What they or we say is all we *see* or see to say at any moment in time. It is our best shot at representing reality. But it will always be our personal reality, not a universal one.

Understanding this is to be looking in the direction of a fresh start. To Possibility!

To *see* that what we think (including every word written in this guide) is just the ‘stuff’ each of us makes up to be ‘right’ – and, inevitably, to make others ‘wrong’ – is to let go of what stops us from getting a fresh start, our beliefs in this, that, or the other.

If there is such a thing as ‘the truth’, I suspect it is the state of love, understanding, wisdom and common sense found in a state of Possibility.

Being willing to get a fresh start is the precursor for loving unconditionally. And that is the unifying power that seems to exist within each of us. In my experience, it is who we are at our essence when freed from our beliefs, opinions and judgements.

Loving unconditionally exists before our stories, before our memories. It exists in the realm of formless Thought.

That formlessness is called by many names: God, Universal Mind, Universal Intelligence, Allah, etc. These are the stories we make up about the source of Thought – the stories that inevitably block our experience of Possibility and a fresh start.

We seem to prefer to attribute meaning to that energy rather than to simply experience the loving feeling when in the state of Possibility. Why turn our experience of that beautiful feeling into dogma?

Being willing to get a fresh start is being willing to *see through the illusion of our personal thinking* – personal thinking that forms rigidly around our stories of religion, philosophy, spirituality, culture, nationality, politics and our sexual mores.

And equally, it is being willing to continue to *see* through the illusions, stories and imaginings any of us may create around what I call Possibility.

To *see* is to be free. Free of every aspect of our make-believe lives.

In *seeing* that every ‘sacred cow’ we hold so dear, each precious value we uphold or inviolate principle we stand for is not ‘the truth’, and is not even close to ‘the truth’, we enter into the formless realm of loving unconditionally.

In experiencing unconditional love we *see what is* – we *see* what is left after everything else is jettisoned from our mind and we are left with stillness, quiet and the potentiality of Possibility. We are left with a beautiful feeling. We are left with the context of a fresh start.

Seeing our past for the illusion it is, is to live in Possibility and loving unconditionally. It is both *the way* to experience a fresh start and *the way* to sustain a fresh start.

GETTING A FRESH START IS EASY ONCE YOU *SEE* IT

Seeing Possibility is a fresh start.

So would you like a fresh start? Like me, I suspect the answer to that deceptively simple question would be a heartfelt – perhaps rueful – ‘Yes’.

I doubt there is one of us who hasn’t contemplated what might have been if only we’d kept our mind open and mouth shut, taken another path, said or done something different.

But even if it were possible to rearrange the past – leave unsaid the words we’ve spoken, undo our missteps – that would still not be a fresh start.

A determination to change what has been isn’t getting a fresh start. When our mind conjures up the past in the present moment and we determine to act differently this time, we are still blinded by our past, still not creating an original beginning.

Memory is so very powerful. So, when I ask you to *see* your past for what it is, I realise how hard that can be. When I put to you that the past no longer exists, that it is dead, gone forever and only exists in the unreliable time capsule we call our memory, we find it hard to *see*.

Our past is important to us, no question. Without memory, we can’t remember the route home, the names of those we love, the things we cherish, which have added to and enhanced our world. But a fresh start isn’t about escaping from something into something else or going from somewhere to somewhere else. It’s about *seeing* a fresh, brand-new, never-before-*seen* moment of experience.

It is *seeing* the world with a level of clarity that is unavailable to us when looking at it through our conditioned thinking.

Possibility, as I’ve shared, is not about thinking positively, confecting an optimistic attitude or engaging in positive thinking or behavioural change. Of course, it helps to not be gloomy about life; however, when we merely rearrange our mental deckchairs with so-called positive thinking, we only temporarily change our intensely personal response and miss *seeing what is*. We’re still looking through the distortions of the past, which is informing our perception of what is presenting, and in doing so we are missing the opportunity for a fresh start.

Below are some examples as to how simple – yet potentially profound – making a fresh start actually is.

THE PICNIC

Suppose for a moment we have planned a picnic and it begins to rain. We may say, ‘Why does this always happen to me?’ If we do, that is our ‘story’. We have invested this rain with meaning! It has morphed from *what is* mere rain, to a rather bleak proof-positive that ‘this always happens to me’.

What is, freed from our ‘story,’ is that we, our delicacies and our picnic guests, will get wet if we go on the picnic. No more, no less.

Seeing what is, is *seeing* beyond our story, *seeing what is*, is *seeing* without our attribution of meaning to what is happening. It’s embracing a fresh start without opinion, regret or recrimination.

Seeing our expectations – that life should be other than how it is in the ever-moving moment – for the ball-and-chain expectations they are is as simple (and as difficult) as understanding that all human experience is created from Thought, from the world within (or maybe from beyond) our own mind.

And *seeing* the quality of our thinking (our use of Thought in any given moment) is determined by our level of awareness – how conscious we are that we think up our experience in each moment – and the precise degree to which we *see* that our thinking, feelings and behaviour are not governed by the outside circumstances, but rather by our thinking in every moment.

The rain is just rain, except when we want life to be other than how it is right now, when we have fallen out of love with life as it is in this moment of rain.

The story we are living in (if we see the rain as some form of punishment, or spoiling our fun, for example) is being re-created from some rainy event or some earlier time when we were disappointed, in expecting that life be other than how it was.

We can innocently carry through time – via our memory – any earlier event and unconsciously attribute personal meaning to the most arbitrary and impersonal event. This is an example of our personal ‘trap of story’ mentioned at the beginning of and in other places in this guide.

We can experience the rain as spoiling our picnic (yet again!) and abandon our plans. We can experience it as being a neutral event as we take shelter and huddle together companionably as we watch nature once more affirming and sustaining life – still another story, but a life-affirming one.

Or we can *see* beyond the fascination and delusion of our humanness – and any story – and notice that it is just raining. We can *see what is*. We are conscious that in creating our personal reality we have innocently become trapped in story – our belief as to the way things are or should be.

It’s a moving feast. We are by turns blithely unaware that we create our own ‘truth’ – or can *see* Possibility and a fresh start. This is the way it is to a lesser or greater degree for all of us. It depends entirely on our level of awareness in each moment.

THE RELATIONSHIP

Let's look at another example, this time a couple having difficulty in their relationship.

For many couples, seemingly intractable problems arise and feed upon the past, compounding one upon the other until the partners are mired in their respective stories that have become 'our relationship'. It's made up of two individual illusions fuelled by expectation, disappointment, guilt, anger and sometimes mental or physical abuse. It has become who each of us believes they are, or who the other is in the relationship.

We seek to manage or innocently manipulate the situation, negotiate boundaries, create rules of behaviour, commit violence, or avoid and withdraw. Sometimes (at times with help) we seek significant change – mostly in the other. We see the problem as being outside our self – with the other.

Yet, here's the deal I am presenting to you: getting a fresh start doesn't mean 'significant change'. It is more profound than that, more powerful than you might imagine ... until the moment you *see* it.

In getting a fresh start, we *see* that our addiction to our story is simply an aspect of the myriad false myths we have created and continue to believe and through which, therefore, we see our life and relationships.

These are all myths we have created about our self, our partner, around others and what relationships should and shouldn't be. And while no one in their right mind would suggest that we accept abuse of any kind, attempts at change, without a shift in our consciousness, merely paper over the cracks.

Whatever has occurred, or whatever we believe has occurred, the pathway to a fresh start cannot be *seen* while we live blindly as innocent victims of our story.

Unless we recognise the distinction between viewing life through the prism of belief, opinion and judgement (all our conditioning/stories) and *seeing what is*, direct from the source I refer to as fresh Thought, we remain asleep to Possibility and a fresh start. As such, we are ill-equipped to create the life or relationships each of us yearns for.

We may ever be challenged to see our beliefs, opinions, judgments and knowledge as other than real or be free and *see* them as the illusions they are. Such is the perceived veracity of our story, accumulated over our lifetime through input from family, friends, teachers, colleagues, scientists, theologians, philosophers, theosophists, psychologists, et. al. and from the books we read, the movies and TV shows we watch and, as stated elsewhere, the *insights*, revelations and epiphanies we may experience.

If 'truth' there be, I suspect (who could possibly know and be in a state of Possibility?) it cannot be written or spoken – and once again I invite you to *see* these words too as simply a challenge to *see* beyond what is written, and instead enter into your world of Possibility.

When we *see* our picnic in the rain, our relationship, and all that makes life the amazing and exciting journey that it is, through the eyes of Possibility, we *see* without blinkers. We're without the wreckage, limitation and, yes, our wondrous lifelong story.

Everything else we may be thinking is put into a fresh perspective and we are left with the same world, the same partner, the same children, but a feeling of unconditional kindness, all-embracing understanding, deep wisdom, and plain old common sense.

Here's an example of a transformation from my own life – one that turned out to be highly beneficial (and surprisingly easy, on the whole) overall. It concerns my relationship with alcohol.

WOOD ALCOHOL

Previously a teetotaler, I began drinking alcohol at the age of thirty-four. By 44, I was an alcoholic.

There were several alcoholics on both sides of my Scottish and Irish family. As a teenager, I wondered whether I too would drink to excess and become an alcoholic due to my pedigree. However, I wasn't prepared to take that chance, hence my three-and-a-bit decades of teetotal days.

When I eventually started drinking, my wondering was confirmed.

By around 36, my wife Ronnie, a psychologist working in the drug and alcohol field, warned me that I was drinking too much and continued to express concern that I was heading toward addiction.

Around 40 years of age, she told me straight that I was an alcoholic. Clearly her assessment was accurate. I was drinking way too much each day: at lunchtimes, every night and on weekends. With a high tolerance for alcohol, I mostly didn't appear drunk. Unwilling (actually feeling incapable) to stop, once started, I kept drinking.

At the time, I had regular monthly (boozy) business meetings with an associate. To acknowledge my 44th birthday, we took ourselves off to a popular up-market eatery and watering hole in Perth. We met at noon, and as we worked through our long agenda, we drank solidly. At around 1.30 pm, work concluded, and we ate.

We continued to drink and, as was our custom, discussed what we saw ailed the world and proffered our solutions. At around 7 pm, as the evening diners began to arrive, we decided it was time to head home. Between us, we'd consumed several bottles of fine wine followed by a back-to-back procession of 'B and B' (Benedictine and Brandy) doubles.

My car was brought to the front of the restaurant and I headed home. This was long before random breath testing in Perth, and the sensible focus we have today on education that discourages drink driving. As I said, my body handled alcohol well, as far as not getting blind, staggeringly drunk; however, upon starting homeward, a thought occurred: I was incompetent to drive.

Other thoughts flashed to mind – ‘Ronnie’s right, I am alcoholic.’ Then another: ‘What if I killed someone, destroying their life and setting the scene for intense misery for their family and friends? As a consequence of my intoxication, what if I smashed the person up so badly that they became a quadriplegic?’ And finally the biggie – ‘I can prevent becoming the drunk driver who killed or maimed a person.’

A feeling of intense gratitude suddenly held me. I still had that opportunity. That chance to start over. My mind was crystal clear.

I was overwhelmed initially with *seeing* what today I describe as Possibility. I had *seen* images and felt the dread feelings of guilt and shame that, due to my irresponsibility, another might lose or have their life awfully and permanently damaged, delivering years of grief and distress to them, family and friends. And shame and horror for my own family!

I *saw* with lucidity that I didn’t drink responsibly and wouldn’t stop once started. It was clear-cut in that moment of *insight* that I was not going to drink alcohol again. Ever! I felt immense relief and freedom, and a strong feeling of peace and happiness.

I had *seen* the opportunity to be free of my abuse of alcohol and the ongoing internal conflict I had around my drinking. Carefully, ever so carefully this time, I made it home, as I had many drunken times before, and walked inside.

This occasion was different, however.

I revealed to Ronnie that I had just had my last drink. That was 32 years ago. I have not had an alcoholic drink since.

I still purchase alcohol for dinner parties. We have alcohol in our pantry. And when Ronnie and I host family and friends at restaurants, I still order and test the wine, as is the custom. But I have not taken more than a sip to ensure that the wine has not oxidised.

Yes, it was a challenge! Being obsessive, I recorded each alcohol-free day on paper for some years.

I had become addicted to how I felt when lubricating my regularly stress-filled mind with drink. I hadn’t yet come to understand how our minds work when we *see* into the realm of Possibility – that was still some years away. But my realisation was profound enough to keep me alcohol-free, even though I was still tempted for some time to assuage my stress with the sure-fire temporary solution of drinking.

I stopped drinking alcohol as a result of *seeing* Possibility. My chilling *insight* into killing or seriously injuring someone, sensing the pain that that would cause others and the guilt and shame it would cause my family and me, probably forever, was a potential reality. It was a reality I hadn’t *seen* before.

And the most powerful emotion was that I felt a deep sense of gratitude for having the chance of getting a fresh start. And I was not willing to surrender that chance.

My point is this: in that moment of *seeing* Possibility, I transformed from a drinker to a non-drinker. I was not then, nor am I today, a recovering alcoholic. I understand absolutely that I could drink a glass of wine today without ever taking another, but I don't need to prove a senseless point. Wisdom and common sense tell me that. I want to be a non-drinker.

With the same clarity, I realise that if I decided to start drinking again, I could, with my tendency towards the extreme, become alcohol-addicted again. I still do some things to excess. I don't think that's a problem (in fact I think it is a blessing), as long as my behaviour is neither self-destructive nor damaging to others.

Transformation can occur within the mind of anyone, and it can be surprisingly easy when we're ready to give up the past. It can happen in all aspects of our life. The metaphor of a leopard not being able to change its spots is just another story.

TRUE FREEDOM

When frozen by fear, we see only impossibility.

Released from the straightjacket of our accumulated ideas, beliefs, opinions and judgements, and freed from the grip of our memories, positive or negative (about ourselves, others, and life in general), we experience true freedom.

Such freedom cannot be understood without also understanding fear, its source and its impact. Fear comes from our capacity to think and is a re-creation of aspects of our past.

Fear blights the lives of individuals, is the bane of humanity and the antithesis of freedom. Fear epitomises the problematic aspect of having memory.

PSYCHOLOGICAL FREEDOM IS THE ONLY TRUE FREEDOM

In not understanding memory and our emotionally charged, fearful thinking around many aspects of our past, we live under the tyranny of yesterday.

At its best, memory can still be an unwelcome intrusion into our moment-to-moment experience of life.

Memory distorts the simple reality of *what is*.

Looking at a rose and comparing it with another variety, we may think that we prefer a yellow rose to a red one. We may think that this one is small in relation to the one we just looked at and which we liked more. Lost in our memory, we miss *seeing* the beauty and wonder of nature before us. We may even think, 'I don't like roses at all, their thorns ruin their appeal'.

Our memory-based checklist of what we like and don't like gets in our way.

On and on we compare and contrast the flower's beauty, splendour and prettiness, and so miss *seeing* and appreciating *what is*.

At worst, our memory (including all irrational fears) renders us frozen in time and lost in our past.

Walking down the track, I turn a corner. A dog, off its lead, bounds towards me. Panicked, I turn and start running, screaming, 'Call your dog, call your dog!'

Behind me, I hear the owner whistle and sense that the dog is returning to its keeper.

I look back. Yes. Relief! Heart racing, cold sweat on my face, I gasp for air as I hesitantly turn. I start walking back towards the owner.

He apologises and reassures me that his dog is friendly, gentle and would not bite anyone. He explains that the dog was running after me as he does when playing a game with his children. It was a dog's natural instinct.

However, I am not reassured. I have a fear of dogs.

Yet, to live life unfettered by memory is impossible. And to live a life free of fear is equally impossible. Nor is it necessary, or even desirable.

However, psychological freedom is possible and desirable, and it 'comes with the territory' when we live life from the awareness of Possibility and that deeper reality of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

Psychological freedom is necessary if we are to experience the manifestation of our core nature, rather than blighted by the blindness of our dead yesterdays, that at their worst manifest today in extreme fear, hatred, jealousy, envy and greed.

The antidote to the paralysis of fearful thinking lies in understanding more fully its root cause – the problematic aspects of our memory.

Through understanding the nature of memory, we can experience life freed from the crippling effects of all frightening or traumatic past events. With this understanding comes a life of psychological freedom.

MEMORIES

The repository of all fear is memory.

For simplicity, imagine memories falling into two groups: memories having *practical use* in our lives and memories having *no practical use*.

Each group has two sub-groups: non-fearful memories, and fearful memories.

Memories Having Practical Use (useful/less emotionally charged memories)	Memories Having Little Or No Practical Use (more emotionally charged memories)
<p>Non-fearful examples</p> <p>Reading, tying shoelaces, washing dishes, speaking, driving a car, cooking, brushing teeth.</p> <p>Fearful examples</p> <p>Avoiding accidents, walking around a snake, looking both ways before crossing a road, being careful when handling poison, saving for a rainy day, understanding high-voltage electricity.</p>	<p>Non-fearful examples</p> <p>Fond memories of a childhood romance, recalling a beautiful sunset, the feeling of joy when thinking of a loved one, remembering a past glorious moment.</p> <p>Fearful examples</p> <p>Animosity towards authority, phobia of flying, anxiety with public speaking, racial hatred, procrastination.</p>

Memories having *practical use* are mostly a blessing ('mostly' will become clearer). Without these memories we could not repeat yesterday's most basic tasks, both non-fearful and fearful.

Memories having *little or no practical use*, even non-fearful examples, if not awake to them, keep us from being present to *what is* and Possibility.

Much more debilitating are fearful examples of memories that have *little or no practical use*. If these are not *seen* and therefore understood, they will invariably blight our life.

The following can be said to be true with regard to all memory, of both *practical* or *little or no practical use*:

- What we experience day-to-day – our ideas, beliefs, opinions, judgements and knowledge – is, overwhelmingly, delivered for use directly from our memory.
- Irrespective of its content or detail, memory delivers our moment-to-moment experience of living – whether experienced as good, bad or indifferent.
- All memories, whether we deem them positive or negative, useful or otherwise, are imaginings re-created from our past posing as our moment-to-moment personal reality – as 'our personal truth'.

That is why memory is both a blessing and a curse: a blessing in that we can consciously re-create what we experienced in our yesterdays, and a curse in that we, in the main, unconsciously re-create what we experienced in those yesterdays. And that is what has us living primarily in impossibility thinking.

As a result of not understanding this, we are blindly indiscriminate in what we re-create in each moving moment and have no idea we are doing so – the crux of the human dilemma! Our 'Groundhog Day' lives on day after day.

Memories of all descriptions – not 'stone walls' or 'iron bars' – create the prison in which we live limited and limiting lives.

It is our lack of understanding of and misuse of memory that has the world stuck in the mire of conflict, strife and unsustainability.

It is the memory of yesterday's grievances in which relationships are trapped that prevents a fresh start.

It is memory that maintains the *status quo*.

An example: while on one hand it is enabling to have a certain skill (another name for applied memory), such as farming the land in a particular way, on the other hand that very knowledge (another name for memory) can get in the way of discovering how to farm in a way that would be more environmentally sustainable or economically viable.

Knowing how to farm is memory having *practical use*, so you could say that it is a blessing. But is it a blessing or a curse when a well-intentioned but misguided farmer persists in working the land in a way that progressively turns arable soil into salty wasteland? It has become a memory having *little or no practical use*.

When we add a fearful memory into that farmer's psychological mix, such as being punished severely as a small boy for experimenting with new ideas, that farmer may be rendered impotent – unable to respond to the critical need for discovering how to prevent further loss of his farmland to salt and to reclaim the land already degraded.

A long-forgotten decision to tread only the path of tradition, in this case the family farming tradition, has become his prison.

Our farmer's unrecognised fear of trying something new might be strong enough to ensure the extinction of good farming land and the destruction of a 100-year-old family business.

Memory has its practical uses. It has its fond memories. It is also home for all fear and fear's offspring – arrogance, ignorance, authority, power and control.

Is it not our individual and collective fearful past memories that block our psychological freedom and the flowering of love, understanding, wisdom and common sense, and the noble feelings that epitomise the deeper core nature of humankind?

And therefore, is it not our core nature that will bring into being:

- love and understanding within family;
- wisdom and common sense on earth;
- sustainability of the earth in agriculture, mining, industry and commerce;
- food, shelter, education and equality of opportunity for all;
- the transformation of government and business into servants of the people?

I am suggesting that kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense are expressions of human psychological freedom, our inherent nature manifesting naturally – not something we learn; not something contained in commandments, chiselled on stone tablets, handed down, that we must follow for fear of punishment or seeking favour in the hereafter.

Fear we learn. Fear is part and parcel of memory. Peace, love and other freedoms like wisdom, common sense, gratitude and joy come from a deeper place within – a place from before the formation of memory.

Before memory, that is, before we think, lies the realm of original Thought, and within that realm exists Possibility.

Thought, inarguably, is the source of all human experience. Thought is not to be confused with the brain – the physical organ that enables the human manifestation of Thought and our sensory experience.

As the origin of human ‘beingness’, Thought is the natural order of things. The rest we make up as we go along, unconsciously utilising this gift of Thought with which to create, live, think, see or *see*, feel, taste, touch and smell.

Thinking, that is all mental activity, is the form that Thought takes within our mind.

Thought is the mysterious element that provides humanity with the capacity to think, to create our moment-to-moment reality of living, and the free will to experience and navigate our way through life.

It is to the degree that we are conscious of Thought (i.e. understand; are aware of; are awake to) that we:

- *see* that we think;
- *see* what we are thinking;
- *see* that it is in thinking, whatever it is we are thinking, that we are creating and experiencing our moment-to-moment reality as human beings;
- *see* in each unfolding moment that we are experiencing our life from Possibility or impossibility;
- *see* that from the realm of Possibility, fear is our servant;
- *see* that from blind fear (a state of impossibility), fear is our master.

We are either creating our reality from our memories, re-creating our past in the moment and living in impossibility – or we are creating a fresh reality free of past fearful memories, and experiencing Possibility, in the moment.

So, if you *see* what has just been explained, you will realise that all memories, of *practical* or of *little or no practical use*, fearful or otherwise, are re-created in the moment via our thinking and do not represent ‘the truth’. And in *seeing* this, we will experience psychological freedom – freedom from our past.

Freedom from the memories dominating your life does not mean that you will not experience fear. That, as pointed out earlier, would not serve you well.

It does mean that you will no longer be fearful of fear itself, nor blinded by it.

Fear will be experienced and understood for what it is – memory carried from the past into the moment and projected into the future to either take care of you and your loved ones or to disable and render you impotent.

We might call fear an illusion, an illusion that might be helpful, or one that might be an illusory ‘ball and chain’ that anchors you to a painful place in time that no longer exists.

Practical fear keeps you from burning yourself with fire, while unrecognised fear can keep you from using fire at all. Practical fear is coupled with wisdom and common sense, and can be a help and not a hindrance.

Misunderstood fear can be immobilising and self-destructive when you re-create a past traumatic event, an event that is not happening now and is unlikely to ever happen again but still gets in the way and prevents you, for example, from having a loving sexual relationship with a partner.

See your past (just another name for memory) for what it is – something that no longer exists, carried through time via memory, re-created in the moment and projected into the future – and be free.

BEING RIGHT OR BEING AT PEACE!

'When we quit thinking primarily about ourselves and our own self-preservation, we undergo a truly heroic transformation of consciousness.'

Joseph Campbell

At the Philosophy of Everyday Living Centre we saw people who were seeking happier, more satisfying relationships. Many clients arrived with a lengthy log of being 'right', and as its basis they would make claims against others or their own past.

We often heard language such as, 'they're selfish, harsh, unreasonable, and mean-spirited'. Or 'he doesn't listen', 'she won't communicate', 'they're not available', 'this isn't fair'. The lists of grievances were invariably focused on the other.

While we, the consultants, would be pointing towards Possibility, the state of awareness beyond blame, our clients, confused or at least puzzled by what we were saying, would ask, 'Are you saying it is impossible to think we are right and at the same time be happy?'

They believed they had 'being right' on their side and, since they were right, they should have been happy. They had done nothing wrong. It was just that life or circumstances or relationships had conspired against them, and anyone who knew the facts of their life and relationships would have to agree – or something along those lines.

When asked if being right and making another (or their circumstances) wrong had ever nourished or improved that relationship, the answer, on reflection, was always the same – no.

What they hadn't *seen* until then was that however subtle, sophisticated or factually based our log of claims might be, being right offers no way to happiness. We are trapped in our story – in our thinking, our illusory prison of rightness. Possibility and the feeling of happiness in that state of consciousness is forsaken for the poison chalice of being right (or even the certainty of themselves being wrong, but I'll cover that a little later), as believing who's right and who's wrong becomes our drink of choice.

Our need to be right is simply our expectation that our unfolding life or that of others be other than how it is or how they are right now. That expectation and that alone is the root of all unhappiness.

Once we *see* that, we are freed from the constraints of expectation. We are free from imagining that the world should be in accordance with our beliefs, opinions and judgements, our myriad needs, wants and desires. We're freed in that moment from our certainty about what is right and wrong and the ideas we hold that dictate the quality of our life and relationships.

The good news is that when we understand the corrosive power of rightness and *see* beyond our story, an exhilaratingly fresh and lighter way of being in the world pervades our life. At that moment, we are freed from the misery that being right inflicts on our life and relationships.

Don't misunderstand me. There is undoubtedly a sense of happiness (more a sense of satisfaction) in knowing that in our heart of hearts we have done what we *see* as the right thing by others, for humanity, for the environment and for the abundant life this planet supports. In this sense, doing right can indeed co-exist with happiness.

However, even in this context – often especially in this context – thinking that we are doing right and being responsible can quickly skid into being right and making others wrong, bad, stupid, incompetent or ignorant. Without awareness, we can step into that quicksand of smugness and into a serious case of self-righteousness.

FROM THE CRADLE

Self-righteousness (self-poisoning) begins early.

Each person we come into contact with infuses our conditioning to some degree with his or her conditioning. Unthinkingly we agree or disagree with their conditioning – we take a position.

Right from the cradle, we absorb, we learn many useful and critically important things from others, as we must: to find our way home, to speak, add and subtract and much more. It is said to start even earlier than that.

And the more loved and revered our teachers, the more erudite, educated or enlightened we think they are, the more deeply we intentionally or unwittingly take in their ‘truths’ and adopt them as our own. Is it any wonder so many of us continue to seek out like-minded others to join and be right with?

Being right and making others wrong is a state, just as Possibility is. Possibility is a state of being authentically open to life. Being right is a state of being closed to life – a state of impossibility.

Being right becomes the acid that corrodes goodwill between couples, families, friends, and colleagues, and beyond that between religions, political parties and groupings of all sorts. It is found on a grand scale between nation states.

BEING RIGHT ABOUT BEING WRONG

*Let's not overlook that we also make ourselves right
about being wrong.*

If and when we do make ourselves 'right' about being 'wrong', it is equally counterproductive. As strange as it might sound, for many the guilt felt for doing the 'wrong' thing can be experienced as our punishment and penance. And, quite unconsciously, that psychological price paid can be the green light to repeat whatever we have done 'wrong' and to once more think and feel badly about ourselves. Hitting the fridge and stuffing ourselves when on a strict diet is an example you might identify with.

Feeling guilty does not nourish the relationship we have with our self. Rather, it assists in perpetuating the vicious cycle of being 'right' about ourselves being in the 'wrong'.

That's not to say we needn't reflect within to *see* more clearly where we might need to lift our game. But who we are in essence is so much more than our story about being right or even about being wrong!

THE CRUCIAL DISTINCTION

*Seeing Possibility is seeing beyond right and wrong
to seeing what is.*

The distinction between being right and being at peace can be hard to grasp. This is understandable, given how important being right is in our society. It's drilled into us from birth. We are taught that there is a right and a wrong way and that being right is good and being wrong isn't.

With that conditioning, many of us feel well equipped to teach others the error of their ways so that they may also contribute to our idea of a better world – a right world, according to us, the bearers of 'the truth'. We 'would-be world-improvers' have much to answer for. I for one ask myself, 'Is that what I am doing in writing this guide?'

You'll be the arbiter of that.

The certainty we have about what is good for others and our certainty about what is bad for others actually blocks our access to Possibility, the state of awareness that enables growth, renewal and rich relationships. It stops us from *seeing* beyond our beliefs of right and wrong. It also stops us from realising the potential for happiness in every moment and for experiencing kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

Needing to be right turns friends into foes, lovers into enemies, colleagues into adversaries, and life into a never-ending battle.

Imagine what your world would be like if you renounced being right and making others wrong.

THE ‘TOWER OF BABBLE’

*Possibility: the light illuminating the yet-to-be-seen,
revealing opportunity, renewal and a fresh future
in whatever aspect of our life matters to us.*

Media provide a perspective on the follies that substitute for the *understanding* we’d all like to exhibit in our lives. Listen to talkback radio, watch TV news or read letters to the editor in the daily newspaper for the follies *du jour*. The many hostile and hate-filled comments on the web and in social media point to the state of impossibility many live in.

One instance (especially during the early days of writing this guide) is the controversy in Australia around refugees and so-named ‘boat people’. Different people have different solutions for dealing with them, and few listen to the other.

Some want to allow refugees arriving by boat to be interned here while waiting for our government’s decision to accept or reject them as genuine refugees and establish that they are not a threat to our safety. Others wish for refugees to be free within our community while they wait. While others want to imprison them in offshore facilities in neighbouring nations until their *bona fides* are settled. Still others want to stop them from landing altogether, turning their boats around, at gunpoint if necessary, and sending them back to where they came from.

And there, by ingrained belief, opinion and judgement on all sides, the matter stands (as this guide is readied for printing). At this point little kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense are present as the differing groups prosecute their case. Possibility and practical, sustainable, humane solutions live in a different realm.

Our often hyper-reactive stance to challenging issues reminds me of H. L. Mencken’s *insight*, ‘For every complex problem there is a solution that is simple, neat and wrong’.

By contrast, *insights* from original Thought and what that throws up take into account both the complexity of any situation and put forward solutions grounded in the simplicity and profundity of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

My purpose here is not to offer what I think might be the solution to the refugee problem. Rather, it is to point towards an answer that exists beyond pitting one set of beliefs against another. At best, any solution based on ideology will have negative, unintended consequences.

Of course, solutions to difficult, complicated problems *seen* in Possibility can still be experienced by some as unacceptable. We all live in our own unique, quite separate, reality and look at life from that personal perspective. What I put to you, though, is that the answers we *see* when accessing fresh Thought are born in the context of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense. That is the foundation for sustainable solutions.

THINKING FOR OURSELVES

'If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, Infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things through the narrow chinks of his cavern.'

William Blake

The idea of 'thinking for ourselves' is discouraged (often unintentionally) even by those we most admire, such as our parents, teachers, coaches, mentors and – yes – even our gurus.

Though they may say, 'think for yourself,' what they often mean is 'believe me, I know the right way', 'the true path'. Or we're instructed to 'read this book, as it contains *the* answer', or 'follow these instructions, and you won't go astray'.

This modelling of being told what we should and shouldn't believe makes it difficult, if not impossible, as we become adults to open our mouth, write a line, or provide information without trying to also get others to think and see the world as we do.

No matter how hard I try for it not to be so, this guide is an example of just that!

I can only trust that some of you will *see* the point and let go of everything that is prescriptive – written in this guide. That said, my intention here isn't about convincing you of any concept (or fact or principle).

No. All available evidence indicates such efforts have us ending up where we started, which is not in a state of Possibility and freedom but rather replacing one set of beliefs for another. *Seeing what is*, not what we remember it to be, takes us beyond all concepts and contexts to a reality of freedom.

When we let go of thinking that we know 'the truth', or relinquish the idea of searching for it, or reconfirming it if we think we have found it, we open our mind to experiencing the kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense that are less than a pico-metre beyond our fixed world of belief.

To the degree that we release ourselves from any concept of 'the truth', we are freed to experience that state. That's our single task. That's our only task if we truly want freedom.

And without exception, even the ‘enlightened’ gurus I have personally encountered have fallen innocently into the trap of ‘smoking their own dope’ – believing that they have found ‘the universal truth’.

They may very well have, but from their behaviour it appeared that the experience of love, understanding, wisdom and common sense – synonymous with *seeing* deeply into the unknown – had given way once more to belief, opinion and judgement, and the need for power and control, for being right and making others wrong.

It seems to be an occupational hazard of being human, and the guru, no matter how enlightened he or she may seem, is no less so. In my experience, they are just as susceptible to getting caught up in their accumulation as you and me. The aphorism, ‘If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him!’ makes sense in that context.

The moment we put another on a pedestal, we have missed the freedom they are pointing us to and instead simply taken on a new belief system.

And the irony of that is that their most useful teaching usually is: ‘Don’t look to me, rather look within – there you will find the answer you are seeking’.

There is no concept of ‘truth’ when *seeing what is*.

Seeing the raw, rich and simple beauty of Life inherent in the state of fresh Thought and Possibility is sufficient. From that source, the universal power of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense flows through us to guide our daily lives if and when we open ourselves to it.

I keep coming back to the point that our individual and our collective level of consciousness may simply be the degree to which we individually or as a collective *see*, are awake to or aware of our own creation of our story about our life and the extent to which our life reflects Possibility or impossibility.

Are we living our life or our collective lives through the impossibility of our story?

The answer to that, I suggest, is all that ails the world. *See* that and we are on our way to creating a new future and, providing we continue to *see* it, a sustainable future.

It’s crystal clear that each of our many and various global challenges is a mere symptom of humanity living in impossibility. In each case, personal and cultural conditioning blankets our individual and collective consciousness and blocks our *seeing* and enacting sustainable solutions.

Fossil fuel is not the cause (or even one of the causes) of global warming and the associated problems.

Desertification is not a cause (or one of the causes) of famine and starvation globally.

Poverty, malnourishment, lack of adequate housing around the world are not causes (or some of the causes) of the desperately disadvantaged in your country or mine.

EACH IS A 'SYMPTOM' – EACH A MANIFESTATION OF IMPOSSIBILITY THINKING.

These monumental global challenges, along with all the others – terrorism, war, rising unemployment, national debt, obesity, depression, stress and anxiety, you name it – are all symptoms. They might look like the cause of a particular problem, or even the scientific cause of a particular problem, but look deeper and you will discover that they are the result, outcome and effect of impossibility thinking. There is an undeniable correlation between our crap thinking, feelings and behaviour and the outcomes we get individually and collectively.

And if you name greed, avarice, ignorance, fear, complacency and lack of funding, lack of will, lack of interest or anything else you might come up with, I put to you that they too are still symptoms. Each is a result of poor-quality thinking, restricted thinking, limited thinking, conditioned thinking ...

Each symptom can be addressed, rectified, brought to an end by solutions discovered within the realm of Possibility. And when implemented from that realm and followed through, followed up and kept on track from that realm, those solutions are sustainable.

Too simple, too simplistic, or just plain dumb? Those comments come from those that believe that solutions can be found at the same level at which they were created, to paraphrase Einstein. They can't. Surely that is obvious.

THE PRIMROSE PATH OF THE IDEALIST

'Idealist: a cynic in the making.'

Irving Layton

Two states of mind are always available to us from which to see – or *see* – the world.

In one sense the *difference* between them is simple semantics; however, there is a deeper reality that takes us from the realm of ideals and idealism to the realm of action.

Idealism is another word for the theory-rich but Possibility-poor way we can be in the world.

Therefore, exploring the concept of the idealist is one way to reflect on what keeps us from living our idealist thinking.

Ideals have been stumbling blocks along my own journey! I used to pat myself on the back for how good and worthwhile my ideals were. I was about social justice, worker participation, conservation, peace, equality of opportunity, living and working in harmony, being a loving neighbour, an enlightened boss, a loving husband and father, living an honourable life.

The bare facts were that these ideals mostly – in some cases always – didn't coincide with the way I lived my life and often still don't. I am not suggesting these are bad ideas. I did not understand life from the vantage point of Possibility, although I visited that realm and *saw* fresh ideas, a new way of looking at life – but these often became simply added ideals in the process.

And like every single, solitary human being, I was doing the absolute best I could with my lack of understanding of how we see or *see* the world. I hadn't *seen* that our professed philosophy of everyday living mostly wasn't what we said it was. Nor was it what we wanted it to be; what we intended it to be; what we believed it to be.

No. Our philosophy of everyday living is actually how we *act*, how we actually live, behave and relate to each other and to the environment in each moment of each day. That alone reflects accurately our true philosophy.

Our philosophy is not what we say it is. Our philosophy is the way we live out each day. The ideal of how I wanted to live my life (and how I wanted the world to be) might have been everything I wanted it to be in my mind, but it was not how it was in my life. In my own mind, I was a legend.

Like so many idealists before me, I had been living in the realm of high-minded but self-defeating knowledge, beliefs, opinions and judgements – the state of mind that precludes ideals coming to fruition and being our lived reality. I didn't recognise that I was trapped in my conditioning, let alone how to intentionally *see* through that unseen web of belief and into the realm of Possibility and to be free to live the ideals that I claimed I cherished.

I recall being in a training workshop in Boston in the early 90s. Dr George Pransky, referred to earlier, was leading the session. There were several interns, including Ronnie (a psychologist and my wife) and Joanne (also a psychologist and our daughter). Helping George was his wife, Linda, and Judy Sedgeman, both acknowledged earlier.

George posed a question to me. I was fair game. What follows is my best representation of what occurred. The point I set out to make is on target, if not the details. Remember that our memories are most unreliable, exponentially so of events that occurred over 25 years earlier.

'John,' George said to me, 'what is your philosophy of life?'

Confidently, and with a little false pride, I responded, 'George, that's simple – to be a loving human being.'

'That's very good – very noble, and quite wonderful,' he replied. 'But are you?' he asked.

'I really try to be,' I replied.

'I didn't ask if you try to be, John. I asked, are you a loving human being?'

'I do my absolute best.'

'Now, John, I don't want to be difficult but I didn't ask you if you do your best to be a loving human being. I asked you whether you are a loving human being.'

'I really work at being a loving human being. I really do, George,' I said with growing bewilderment.

'Come on, John, my question wasn't whether you do your best at being a loving human being. My question was: are you a loving human being?'

'George, I can't make it any clearer,' I shot back, now with a tinge of annoyance. 'I work on being a loving human being each and every day. I am dedicated to being a loving human being.'

'Gee, John,' George came back, 'I get that you work on it and are dedicated to it, but that is not what I asked you. I asked: are you a loving human being?'

I will go no further with our dialogue. It went on till the morning break. That was a long time.

George kept asking the same question and I managed to continue to miss his point.

How I managed to keep answering with a different twist each time and so avoid *seeing* the deeper point was testimony to the fact that I was lost in idealism and removed from *what is*. I didn't *see* that saying that you are something, i.e. that I *am* a loving human being, and actually *being* a loving human being are not the same thing.

We went to the morning tea break with me feeling very lost and frustrated.

What was interesting was that, while I missed the point, it was clear that each of the other males (apart from me, they all had PhDs) also missed the point; however, each of the women got it straight away.

Interesting?

While drowning my sorrows in a cuppa during the break, the penny finally dropped. I had an *insight*. What we say our philosophy is, is not what it is. How we actually live our life is our philosophy.

One is our ideal, our vision of how we would like to be, try to be, etc.

Our philosophy, on the other hand, is where the rubber meets the road. It is the way we actually live our life, each and every day.

What an important breakthrough for me that was! I saw how deluded I was about how I was in the world. I was not how I 'believed myself to be'. I was how I 'behaved'.

I would spike into the realm of fresh Thought and *see* Possibility, but those wonderful moments of clarity, beautiful thoughts, feelings and discovery were not understood by me for what they were. Then, as now, I was unfolding. The difference today is that I have at least a clue as to what is going on in my mind. Today I say the vision I hold for my life is 'to be a loving human being'. That keeps me on track most of the time to being one.

Being an idealist is to be lost in the desire that things be other than how we are actually creating them. As idealists, we want life to be the theory we have constructed in our heads. And not the reality we actually live.

We don't realise that everything in each moment is the perfect launching pad into Possibility and living the ideal. In that state, we're naturally tuned to kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense. We're actually living what we'd call an ideal.

Life as it is for each of us (including that we may be an idealist) is absolutely okay. Perfect. Our job isn't to direct life in one way or another. It's to *see* life free of the contamination of our ideals and to be free to be who we really are – kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense – and to live responsibly and sustainably.

The two states of mind – one the realm of believing in theoretical ideals, the other of living our ideals – feel profoundly different. Our behaviour and effectiveness are equally so.

If we're an idealist, we remain unfulfilled, no matter how hard we work towards achieving our ideals and how many protest marches we walk, or how much we talk, write, philosophise and try to influence. We feel unfulfilled no matter how famous and celebrated we may be; our work and our satisfaction with it will be a shadow of what it might be if fuelled by Possibility and being our ideals.

In reality, idealism is the antithesis of actually living the imagined ideal.

Manifesting the ideal is the only thing that really makes a difference in our life, our relationships or in our world.

Think of the man or woman who sincerely wants a loving relationship with their partner, or even the one who is genuinely earnest about living from a loving state – but in both cases they fail to live their ideal. He or she may read or even write books on the subject, attend courses, participate in relationship counselling and even, as in my case, counsel and coach others on how to have a loving relationship. The focus of their life may be on loving relationships, but their day-to-day reality is the only thing that counts. If they behave in unloving ways in their relationships, their 'ideal' of having loving relationships is but a figment of their imagination.

A simple way to look at this is that what we *do* is our actual philosophy. What we *say* is our ideal.

What causes the difference?

Don't look at whether you 'go' to church, but instead look carefully at how kindly you live your life. Do you 'turn the other cheek'?

Don't look at whether you're a peace activist. Look rather at whether your relationships, particularly those with people you don't like or respect, are kind and peaceful. Don't look at whether you're a climate-change activist; look at your lifestyle and your own greenhouse gas emissions.

The 'isms' put forward over the centuries to save humanity from its erroneous thinking, feelings and behaviour haven't worked. Why is that?

Idealists would say that our particular ideal (Christianity, Islam, communism or capitalism, for examples) hasn't worked simply because it wasn't given sufficient opportunity, wasn't sufficiently understood or funded, or that people weren't dedicated enough to bring the ideal to realisation.

But whether it is religious, philosophical, psychological, sociological, political, economic, ethical or spiritual idealism, each has failed to create a society that walks gently hand-in-hand with the wonder of Life. Each has failed to bring about a world community living in a state of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense; one that lives and shares the fruits of Possibility.

Idealism purports to be about creating something better, something new, but is actually a linear movement (looking for change) that transports, via our conditioned mind, the past into the future.

So what can create a spike in our awareness, a quantum leap into a new reality? How can we go from idealising to being? How can we act in a loving, understanding, wise, common-sense way and be the catalyst for transformation in our own lives?

What is the key to unlocking the way to our transformation, and to unlocking the shackles of idealism and *seeing* that which already exists within our mind before the addition of ideals – before that conditioned realm that harbours our beliefs, opinions, judgements and knowledge?

How do we quit talking about what we want to do, what we aspire to do – and actually do it, be it?

The answer lies in understanding and *seeing* within our mind's eye how the human experience is created, how we create our reality in each moment. Understand this and we are freed from the trap of idealism.

We shift to a life lived increasingly in a context of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense – a life of action and rationality rather than a life lived in the self-righteousness and pomposity of great and noble ideals.

And to *see* to the heart of this is to awaken to the factors that give shape and substance to all human experience. These elements create personal reality for you, for me and for everyone on Earth. Just as gravity is the force of attraction between particles and mass in our universe, so too are these elements the force behind creating the human condition, for better or worse.

As detailed throughout this guide:

Element One is Thought, the formless energy with which we *see* and manifest original, fresh, clear and creative thinking in the moment (the realm of Possibility.) And it's that same energy with which we see life reconstructed from our memory, re-creating our past experience, conditioning and knowledge in the moment (the state described as impossibility).

Element Two is consciousness or awareness. Awareness is our *seeing* that we create the totality of our experience of our life (our personal reality) via Thought in one of two forms – one: as original, impersonal thinking from the fountain of fresh Thought and Possibility; two: recycled, personal thinking re-created from our memory, the latter being the realm of impossibility and the home of our idealism (our beliefs).

As long as we strive for and profess our ideals (like me writing this guide, for example) we are most likely and quite innocently re-creating the past and failing to live the ideal as our moment-to-moment reality.

To be aware is to be awake to the fact that our ideal:

might be a wonderful idea, but in reality it is just a theory in our mind;

might be what we are thinking about it, talking about it, striving for, but we are not actually living it in each moment as our way of life.

Consequently, any ideal simply held in our memory and talked about as a good or even a grand idea is just that, and can prevent us from manifesting the ideal as part of our living reality.

Why? Because being present to *what is*, is a state of Possibility, the *being* state of all ideals. On the other hand, living from our memories is being lost in our lifeless past and simply represents our rhetoric, not our philosophy lived.

Those old sayings, which go something like, ‘He is an armchair: environmentalist, social-justice advocate, healthy living advocate’, etc. describe the idealist – great on theory but lacking in practice. ‘Do as I say, not as I do’ is another way of describing the idealist.

Ideals will be out of our reach so long as we reach for them, talk about them, write about them rather than live them in that state of actually *being* our philosophy.

The trap of idealism is wrapped up in the phrase, ‘talking the talk, not walking the walk’.

LIVING FROM IDEALISM OR IN POSSIBILITY

The trap for idealists is that believing ourselves to be one prevents us living the ideal.

Following are examples of the gulf between living in the realm of idealism (the realm of good or great ideas) and the realm of Possibility (the realm of kindness, understanding, wise and common-sense action):

A person living in Idealism	A person living in Possibility
wants and promotes peace	lives in peace
wants intimacy and closeness with partner	is intimate and close with partner
wants a loving relationship	is loving in relationship
dedicates their life to expressing or writing about their philosophical perspectives	lives their philosophy – in kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense
wants communication	is communicative
believes listening to others is crucial, even teaches the art of deep listening	listens deeply to others and, as importantly, to self
advocates the virtue of forgiveness	forgives unconditionally
preaches tolerance and acceptance	embraces all of humanity – no exceptions
judges self's and others' shortcomings in not measuring up to their ideals (however innocent the judgement)	sees the fundamental innocence in self and others
advocates loyalty	is loyal
espouses that we should do what is in the interest of the common good	acts in ways that support the common good
professes the importance of being understanding	is understanding
teaches the ideal	lives the ideal

seeks enlightenment	is at peace with being unenlightened
believes spirituality is divine, special, exclusive, or must be earned and is for the special or chosen few	sees spirituality in everything; as being all-inclusive, ordinary; from the cesspit to the rainforest, psychopath to saint
promotes generosity	is generous
teaches the virtue of honesty	does not consider the alternative
fosters the importance of gratitude	feels grateful
preaches (i.e. from the Bible, Koran, Kaballah or Bhagavad Gita)	lives from a state of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense
believes the end justifies the means	<i>sees</i> that the means is the end

In the moment we *see* the illusion of our own beliefs, we *see* our idealism as being one of well-intentioned good ideas but yet to be our lived reality. We *see* that we are missing this moment, the only moment there is, to live beyond the idea of the ideal and experience kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

In that instant, we are present to *what is*, without any desire for it to be consistent with our imagined ideals. To *see what is*, is to *see* through the illusion of memory and *see* free of knowledge, opinion, belief or judgement. It's to *see* into the realm of Possibility and the wonder of Life.

Idealism, in all its forms, is what creates separation from once-loving relationships.

It is, in the main, driving all movements and divides society into proponents of various ideals.

Idealism is behind peace activists fighting with mounted police and spilling blood by poking sharpened sticks into the flanks of their horses; it's behind the idealisation of 'God' as justification for terrorist bombings and beheadings.

It's at the heart of the bitterness of the pro-abortion and pro-life debate. It's why we are upset with what we see every news hour and read in the morning papers.

SO, FELLOW IDEALISTS, WHAT DO WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND?

*Ideals live in our imagination but are actioned
by the power of Possibility.*

In understanding Thought (that formless energy generating our life and experience) we *see* that we can recycle past memories and thus create an idealised reality, or we can access fresh Thought and experience a reality that is present to life as it is ... not as we imagine it to be or should be.

What we need to understand is that when we experience fresh Thought, we *see* Possibility and experience a feeling of connectedness, peace and good humour.

In that state of awareness we *see* our idealism for what it was – simply a good idea separating us from the deeper reality of living a life of action inspired by Possibility. We *see* into a reality free of fear – a reality that is open to Life as it is – and in response to this we take the action we are moved to take.

To experience life beyond enslavement to our conditioning – to our beliefs, opinions and judgements – is to be free. Free to get a fresh start. Free to take action without fear or favour. Free to embrace life unconditionally.

The primrose path of idealism is *seen* for what it is: the illusion in which you and I imagine ourselves to live – but don't. The source of our transformation exists beyond idealism. It is *seeing what is*. It is *seeing* Possibility.

OF TWO STATES OF MIND – CONSCIOUS OR UNCONSCIOUS LEADERSHIP

Possibility is the realm of conscious leadership.

Our state of awareness determines whether the opportunities that come to mind benefit us alone or benefit the broader community as well. You might say our use of Thought has us engaging with life, either from a self-absorbed perspective, or from a perspective that encompasses the common good.

In my experience, the entrepreneur in a state of Possibility is motivated by much more than making money. He *sees* serving others as integral to any project *seen* and undertaken. These entrepreneurs are the ones demonstrating ‘conscious leadership’.

On the other hand, let’s look at the ‘opportunistic business person’, or those displaying ‘unconscious leadership’. This person taps only their memory, with its storehouse of conditioning (rather than *seeing* Possibility and the vantage point that provides), so they are confined in their vision and their actions to thinking only about their own imagined needs, wants and desires.

In this state of mind, referred to as the realm of impossibility throughout this guide, they are driven by gaining a personal advantage. Often it is purely monetary. Sometimes it is the imagined status and power such an opportunity may buy or bring with it, or maybe it’s a combination of these or other factors. The opportunist is, by definition, governed by the way they were conditioned growing up.

An opportunist is unlikely to have been given cause to reflect on the common good growing up. And if their business gives the appearance of being in service to the common good, it is likely that what is being offered is more likely to be bait for a higher personal reward and/or accolades that the opportunist can see down the track. Being in service to others (to the common good) is not on that opportunistic businessperson’s radar.

In a state of Possibility, human beings discount heavily (even if not eliminate entirely) the personal cost/benefit considerations in manifesting the opportunity *seen*. Moderated by kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense, we do what we do for the benefit of all, including ourselves.

On the other hand, seeing business from our conditioned state of mind, as an opportunist, we see the personal cost/benefit considerations as being all that matter. The common good is of little – and, in its extreme, of no – consequence in the decisions we make and the actions we take ... decisions that often prove detrimental to the common good.

The collective level of consciousness of a Board of Directors and the CEO is either guided by a state of Possibility or impossibility; we are either a consciously or unconsciously led business or organisation.

In a state of Possibility, corporate decisions are made with the common good in mind.

In a state of impossibility, benefits to the corporation dominate the culture, and at the extreme end of the spectrum *only* those that benefit the Board, CEO, and the most senior personnel are considered. Shareholders in this culture are considered only out of the self-interest of the Board. Customers, staff, community and the environment may not figure in their deliberations and decisions at all. If they do, it is only in terms of how best they can be exploited and used for the benefit of those at the top. You may know of corporations and organisations, including not-for-profits, that fall into this bag.

There is a great price to pay in impossibility leadership, but the costs are not *seen* when the decisions are made. If they were, they would not be made.

Globally, the last three decades or so have been dominated by impossibility thinking at the most senior levels. These decades have seen opportunistic thinking playing out in the boardrooms of companies and parliaments around the world. One result that you will be familiar with is the Global Financial Crisis and the parlous state the world is in today, ethically, economically, environmentally, politically and socially.

ENTREPRENEURIAL THINKING vis-a-vis OPPORTUNISTIC THINKING (Conscious vis-a-vis Unconscious Leadership)

Authentic entrepreneurialism recognises the common good – opportunism is limited to feeding our false self.

What follows illustrates the distinctions between the two states of mind: one of possibility and conscious leadership, or another of impossibility and unconscious leadership.

While applying to leaders, more importantly it applies to you and me – for we are all leaders. Stop imagining that you are not a leader. You are!

The two columns below signify when you and I are leading from one state or the other.

Authentic Power

We *see* that power is inherent within all human beings, emanating from within our mind. We don't experience power as being externally generated by others over us or us over others. Life is not seen as a power game, as winning or losing, but of you and me transcending our ego and allowing Possibility to reveal the best way forward and direct our individual actions. We understand that no person, group or way of looking at life holds 'the truth'. We realise that authentic power resides at our core, within every human being, and manifests in kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

Inauthentic Power

We believe power is external to ourselves, residing in education, societal structures, rank, affiliation, social standing, image and money. Inauthentic power focuses on trying to control what others think and do. Power over others and over circumstances preoccupies our thinking and exhausts our energy. Life is a never-ending striving for advantage. Winning, getting our way and exercising power and control over others is what matters to us above all else.

Fearlessness

With the source of fear *seen* as coming from within our mind, our leadership is not ruled by imagined, fearful, or reactive thinking. The distinction between psychological fear born in past experiences and the actual threat of a real and present danger is clearly *seen*. In that *seeing*, our fear becomes an appropriate, helpful emotion, rather than an overwhelming psychological burden that controls and drives our actions.

Fearfulness

Since we are unaware of the internal source of fear, our survival seems constantly under threat from circumstances and others. Our fearful thinking drives us to seek the imagined security that the illusion of power and control provides. Being blind to the power of our beliefs, opinions, and judgements has them driving and controlling us. Our lack of understanding blinds us to *seeing* through our fear to fresh Thought and Possibility.

Authentic Listening

Listening to others deeply and respectfully (without our beliefs, opinions and judgements over-riding our *seeing what is*) is a treasured experience. Our listening really facilitates drawing out the authentic thinking, feelings and creative ideas both within ourselves and in others. By our deeper listening, we encourage the separate and differing realities of others to be expressed, explored and considered. In this state of authentic listening we are able to hear clearly what we may feel uncomfortable with. Differences are not threatening to us. Our listening provides the environment in which others might also *see* Possibility.

Pretend Listening

At best, we pretend to listen. We hear the words but are untouched by the thinking or feelings behind them. Unaware (even temporarily) of the authentic individual within others, and ourselves, we are disconnected, threatened and reactive to difference. At worst, we don't even pretend to listen; we ignore, and in our fear-based arrogance, ride roughshod over others. Our lack of listening holds impossibility in place for ourselves, and fosters a fearful environment.

In Integrity

We are in integrity with our inner wisdom and common sense. Our connection with our deeper intelligence and inner authority enables us to hold steady in the face of extreme difficulty. Short-term solutions and gains are not sought. The distinctions between what is sustainable and unsustainable are obvious to us.

Out of Integrity

We vacillate, give in to pressure and keep changing our mind under what we experience as external pressure. We have little sense of what is real and what is false. Expediency, self-preservation and the need for personal power and the illusion of personal control rule us. We are blindly committed to 'the party line', as we imagine it serves us even when the greater good isn't served by it.

Vanguards and Champions

We are vanguards for what will benefit others, the common good and the planet. We are champions for the advancement of our colleagues, our community and humanity, and demonstrate courage and humility in doing so. Those we support could be near or in far-off lands; it makes no difference.

Self-Promoters

We promote ourselves and seek power, wealth, glory and fame, either directly or through some proxy. Exploiting others is our *modus operandi*. We cannot genuinely support others and promote life-enhancing causes because our narcissism and need to be in the limelight drive us.

Independent Thinking

We are independent while simultaneously being genuine team players, providing the team outcome is in service to the common good. For us, toe-ing the party line when we *see* that it is not serving the common good and being mindlessly involved and supporting the unsupportable and unsustainable are anathema. We make decisions based on our inner wisdom and integrity even when pressured to support or vote with the so-called power group.

Second-Guessing

We lead by second-guessing, from opinion polls, by selling out to pressure groups or our need to be part of the control group. Our access to fresh Thought, inner wisdom and common sense is constantly overridden by our fear and conditioning. Independent and original Thought is forgotten territory; the power-line is our line. We blindly follow or go along to get along.

Free

In accessing Possibility we are:

- free to *see* and explore creative and innovative ideas – ours or others’;
- free to *see* the obvious – to *see what is*, rather than our ideas, beliefs, opinions and judgements;
- free to *see* beyond the ‘wisdom of the day’;
- free to explore ideas and solutions put forward by others even though they may not make sense to us;
- free to *see* our allies and our opponents with equal clarity, objectivity, kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

A Prisoner

In failing to access Possibility, we see only what we have been conditioned to see. The obvious has become invisible to us. We don’t see *what is*. In that state of mind we are blocking our access to fresh Thought, and experience life exactly as it conforms to our conditioning thinking. We spend our life manipulating and conniving; doing whatever it takes to get our neurotic (and, in the extreme, sociopathic or psychopathic) needs met and to survive. Consolidating and furthering our imagined needs, wants and desires is our solitary confinement.

Connection to Life

We experience a reverence for Life in all its manifestations. The distinction between ‘them’ and ‘us’ fades – eventually to extinction. The notions of tolerance and acceptance are transcended by our kind understanding and embrace.

Disconnection from Life

We don’t experience a reverence for Life because we don’t experience being part of it. We feel separate, imagine we are superior, and use, abuse, and dispense with people. We exploit nature and, as a result, pollute the earth, waterways and air. Overwhelmed by our own need for survival, we’re numb to the deeper feelings and connection with Life lying dormant within.

Faith

A faith in the wonder and mystery of Life translates to faith in our self, our colleagues, and the world of Possibility that is innate within all humanity. Notwithstanding some of the impossibility thinking and behaviour around us, we *see* that all humanity is, at its essence, Possibility.

Lack of or Misplaced Faith

Any faith we may have is based on an external authority, deity, ideology or belief system.

Loyalty

Seeing Possibility enables us to transcend the ever-changing circumstances life throws up. We remain loyal to our relationships. Even when difficult decisions, such as firing subordinates, are to be made, we have the best interests of our colleagues at heart and the common good in mind. Trust in our leadership and in our integrity is seldom doubted, even in times of great disruption and despair.

Loyalty is Missing

Noble feelings, including loyalty, are missing from our daily experience and therefore our leadership. This lack of loyalty manifests in many ways and contributes to the distrust and anxiety permeating our organisation. It is always a case of me – first, second, and ...

Being Ordinary

Seeing from the vantage point of Possibility allows us to recognise the extraordinary range, skill and depth of qualities and abilities within humanity. We also recognise our own uniqueness, strengths and weaknesses. In accessing Possibility, we *see* the sublime everywhere and in that context recognise our own ordinariness in the grand scheme of Life.

Being Special

In failing to *see* Possibility, we are blind to the wonderful qualities in others and in ourselves. We think that being special, being the best, and being in control will fill our need to feel worthwhile.

Awake to Life

We are awake to our moment-to-moment experience, whatever that may be – what we might describe as good, bad or indifferent, arising within our mind. We *see* our life as an ever-unfolding process, creative or otherwise, or one that simply recycles our past, at best with some minor renovations and additions. We recognise that the degree to which we are awake equates to our capacity in the moment to *see* Possibility more clearly via accessing fresh Thought. We are conscious of how Possibility or impossibility shapes our moment-to-moment thinking, feelings and behaviour.

Asleep at the Wheel of Life

We experience life as something that is happening outside of us and to us. We are sleeping within the illusion of yesterday's Thought-created reality and imagine the dream is real today. In our failure to *see what is*, we feel frightened, jumping at the shadows cast by our own thinking.

A Love Affair with Life

We regularly experience our life beyond our knowledge, beliefs, opinions, judgements, ideologies and dogmas. We have tasted the experience of unconditional love. We know that quality of love that exists within the realm of Possibility. As a result, we are in love with life and all that Life represents.

A Love Affair with Ourselves

Our predominant state is self-absorption. Romance, sex, excitement, infatuation, idealism and all manner of good intentions are possible for us, but uncontaminated, unconditional, and therefore uncontained love from the realm of Possibility is impossible in our self-involved state. Our love affair is with our self.

Our Priorities are Aligned and Congruent

Within the context of wisdom and common sense, we *see* and understand what really works. This leads to:

- delivering the promise to clients;
- thinking strategically;
- fiscal prudence;
- sound organisation and administration;
- productive effort;
- self-discipline;

- self-responsibility;
- carefully considered risk-taking.

Within the context of kindness and understanding, we *see* and understand *what really matters*. This leads to:

- having a vision and purpose that transcends the individual and addresses the needs of the common good;
- fairness, decency and equity;
- fostering and supporting the aspirations of others;
- sustainability in resource use, of the environment, health and the wellbeing of all;
- caring for those that cannot care for themselves.

In understanding how the convergence of *what actually works* with *what actually matters*, our leadership both works and matters. We lead by example with a minimalist approach to all forms of power and control. We don't tell people what they should and shouldn't do; we *see* that they too have access to Possibility and the kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense needed to make sustainable decisions. Our job as a leader is to support a creative, self-reliant but inter-dependent environment.

Seeing what is, is being free of a fixed position, making sound, sustainable decisions and taking appropriate action. It may be considered right-wing or left-wing; that is of no consequence.

AND it is reviewing and re-evaluating the situation and taking whatever corrective steps need to be taken.

Our Priorities Conflict

We think our beliefs, opinions and judgements are right and that others are wrong in theirs. We don't recognise that doing *what works* or doing *what matters*, in isolation from one another and in separate silos of ideological thinking, fails sooner or later. Driven and controlled by our conditioning, we lead rigidly from impossibility thinking – the power and control mentality of the extremes of left and right.

For example, we leaders on the 'right' of the political spectrum claim that we have the answers. We claim that we know '*what works*' in society and that if others do what we say works, that *works best* and *matters most*. Of that we have no doubt.

We leaders on the 'left' are certain that we have the answers to what ails our organisations and society in general. We claim we know '*what matters*' in organisations and in society and that if others *do what we say matters, that works best for all*. Of that we have no doubt.

And we leaders who claim the 'centre' are convinced that we have the answers to the problems the world faces. We believe we have the correct balance between *what we think works* and *what we think matters*. We, like the left and the right, also fail to understand that conscious leadership is neither about balance nor about any ideology, but rather about working from a state of awareness of Possibility – a state of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

We are Congruent

What we think, what we are feeling, what we say and how we act – all line up. We are authentic in how we show up in the world.

We are Incongruent

We are confused as to what we really think, disconnected from how we feel and speak and act in ways that confuse others as to where we really stand as a human being. Being authentic is foreign to us.

In summary, I *see* a world in which you and I live from Possibility; a world in which we are kind to and understanding of each other – where our collective wisdom, common sense, sense of fairness and decency govern all our decisions.

I *see* a world where doing what works and doing what matters seamlessly converge, leading to a state where our actions concerning Earth and all that live on, below and above her, are sustainable.

OPENING AGAIN TO LOVE

*'Love is misunderstood to be an emotion; actually,
it is a state of awareness, a way of being in the world,
a way of seeing oneself and others.'*

David R Hawkins

Information from the American Psychological Society in 2018 reveals that between 40 and 50 percent of those in first-time marriages see and experience impossibility and take the path of divorce. It also reveals that second-marriage breakdowns are higher, with third-time marriages higher again.

These figures say that our level of consciousness is pretty low when we enter our first marriage, and it hasn't improved in marriages two and three.

Of course, there are myriad variations on the theme but, at its root, divorce happens when neither partner *sees* Possibility, the state of awareness for transforming our self and therefore our relationship with another – no matter what relationship we are in.

During 14 years as a coach, counsellor and mentor at the Philosophy of Everyday Living Centre, it was evident to me that each marriage (or relationship) could be transformed. That is, providing *at least one* partner *saw* Possibility and a new vision for their relationship.

While experiencing an awakening to love, understanding, wisdom and common sense, transformation occurs within the mind of the individual. As this transformation occurs, it also occurs in their relationship with their partner and their life. As David Hawkins says, love 'is a state of awareness'.

Not every marriage will be saved (nor might it be desirable), though in the realm of Possibility each one can be. However, each marriage can be transformed when the pain and frustration of a dysfunctional relationship can be *seen* for what it is – a product of our conditioned mind – and, in the light of that understanding, be transformed.

Again, I am referring to *transformation*, not change; to creating a brand-new relationship with the same person. That new relationship may result in the couple moving forward together in love and understanding, or parting in a context of wisdom and common sense.

It's not about reaching a compromise and papering over the cracks with one of the numerous change processes used in marriage counselling.

It's about *seeing* our partner, our self and our relationship through fresh eyes; eyes opened as if for the first time in the relationship.

'Fresh eyes' means *seeing* our partner's and our own innocence in all of our or their missteps of the past.

And even after some time, when we may have lapsed back into dysfunctional thinking, still remembering our partner from that newly conditioned place of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

Experiencing our relationship from our memory, recently renovated by experiencing Possibility – while not of the same quality as the first-hand, in-the-fresh-moment experience – is still far better than living our relationship from our past view, which was unkind, lacking understanding, unwise and short on common sense.

Yes – even though our cage may still get rattled from time to time, we've abandoned our less-than-useful conditioned beliefs, opinions and judgements – our old internal checklist, the test our partner has in the past failed to meet – and replaced it with a new level of awareness.

Seeing afresh and *seeing* Possibility is at the heart of the rebirth and renewal of all relationships.

SETTING IN TRAIN RENEWAL

*In seeing Possibility, we instantly understand that we
and we alone are 100-percent responsible for each
of our relationships.*

One idea common in the field of marriage counselling is that it takes both partners changing and working together to make a broken marriage whole. In that process, they are asked to enter into agreements and arrangements and to make difficult, if not impossible, compromises. In effect, it sets in place rules of engagement. I have yet to see this approach work in the way *seeing* Possibility will. Yet it may – Possibility can show up at any time with any catalyst.

From within the realm of Possibility, the transformation of just one partner can make whole a broken marriage. But make no mistake: *it does take one partner to see* – with crystal clarity – into the realm of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense. It does require one of the couple to become a new person (not a perfect person) in their relationship with the other.

One partner *seeing* Possibility and experiencing that deep feeling of kindness and understanding is powerful enough to transform him or her and consequently the relationship.

The other partner may become temporarily more upset by the sudden transformation of their partner. This is not uncommon. The plates may fly when the habitual behaviour and predictable reactions from their partner go missing!

That will not be a problem provided the one *seeing* Possibility maintains that state of awareness in the face of their partner's upset and possible abuse. In a state of kindness, we find the words, actions, sensitivity and fullness of heart to respond in a way that supports the other in regaining their bearings.

For some, reading this may be confusing, more than likely 'Pollyanna-ish'. We are conditioned to believe that blame for the breakdown of any relationship is proportional. In apportioning blame, percentages are attributed to each partner by the partners themselves, or by family and friends, and perhaps – even silently and sometimes openly – by their counsellor. It may be 50/50, 60/40, 100/0, etc.

Consider carefully this idea: each partner is *100-percent* – yes, *100-percent* – *responsible*, no matter the estimates by ourselves or others. Each partner is 100-percent responsible for their contribution, for their own dysfunction, for their own lack of awareness.

When we wake up and thus *see* Possibility, we automatically assume 100-percent responsibility for our relationship with the other. We assume 100-percent responsibility for the transformation of our 100-percent contribution to our relationship with our partner and the relationship (our relationship) we have created with them.

We don't take 100-percent responsibility for the *other person's* 100-percent contribution. That is their responsibility – 100 percent.

Our sole focus becomes being the loving, understanding partner *we* need to be for the transformation of the relationship to occur. Our partner has nothing to do with that, as difficult as that may be to *see* at this point.

The old maxim, 'It takes two to tango', has no application in the realm of Possibility. *Seeing* Possibility and transforming our relationship is a solo act. The unhealthy mental dynamic we co-author in a dysfunctional marriage and the destructive emotions entailed are disengaged, dismantled, undone within the partner *seeing* Possibility.

When that happens, the relationship is instantly transformed. Why? It takes two to fight. Remember the earlier references to the *koan*, 'You have heard the sound of two hands clapping. *What is* the sound of one hand clapping?' *See* that and you are *seeing* what is required to sustain a quality marriage.

It doesn't necessarily follow that the other partner will still want the relationship. They may not want to or be willing and therefore able to *see* Possibility. Without exception, however, the newly discovered experience of kindness and understanding by one will powerfully influence the outcome. There will be a feeling so warm and heartfelt from the partner *seeing* Possibility that the other will be touched to some degree by the energy and power of that kindness.

This now sounds like I'm saying life is an outside-in experience – I'm not, and it isn't. But when we are treated in a kind and understanding way, because of our conditioning, we respond more positively. For the same reason, when we are treated in an abusive way, we habitually react negatively, that is, until we *see* the innocence in our transgressor.

That is, until we have experienced the state of Possibility and have *seen* the source of our upset – that the source is us, our thinking, not our partner. Till that point, we will be reactive to both kindness and abuse. After we have experienced and understood that state of awareness, we will be responsive rather than reactive to both.

Before *seeing* the source of our reality, we do not have the emotional freedom to maintain our bearings when being attacked. At best we impose self-control over our thinking and feelings. At worst, we lose control, maybe scream and act violently.

The process of renewal and consolidation at our new levels of awareness may take some time. Trials, tribulations, ups and downs will no doubt be experienced as the partner *seeing* into the realm of Possibility may move in and out of that state of awareness.

Shifting to a higher level of awareness, *seeing* ever more clearly that we are the creator of our experience, is different for each person. For some, the *insight* is sufficiently powerful and it ‘clicks’ immediately – for others it takes many ‘clicks’ to *see* and transcend a lifetime of invisible conditioning.

So long as we *see* deeply enough to recognise that the problem we face *is not out there* with our partner, but rather within our own mind, we will, with the realisation that we are 100-percent responsible for our own thinking and the feelings and behaviour that follow, continue to evolve to higher levels of consciousness.

And we will evolve in loving and understanding our partner more deeply.

The potential of *seeing* and experiencing Possibility and our personal transformation exists in the mind of each partner, as it does in every human being (unless too severely brain-damaged by accident, alcohol or drugs).

It takes two to keep fuelling the psychological fires of upset, hopelessness, despair, resentment and anger. But it takes only one to *see*, for a fresh start and a transformed relationship. The moment one partner *sees* their anger, despair, hurt feelings, beliefs, opinions and judgements as their creation alone, and not to do with the other, the relationship is transformed.

Although the chances are now high that the marriage will continue, that may, as stated, not occur. Notwithstanding anything else that may unfold, it *is* a brand-new relationship, a kinder, gentler, more respectful and equal one. One partner is transformed. The relationship is no longer the one it was.

The one *seeing* into the realm of Possibility *sees* that all memory-based negative thinking and feelings are the kiss of death to marriage (or any relationship). In *seeing* that, their contribution transforms into a loving and understanding one. Wisdom and common sense are to the fore. The relationship in one person’s reality is a brand-new relationship.

Yes, the Zen *koan* says it beautifully, ‘You have heard the sound of two hands clapping. *What is* the sound of one hand clapping?’

IN TRANSFORMING OUR RELATIONSHIP, *NEVER EVER* FOCUS ON OUR PARTNER CHANGING

To look in the direction of our partner changing is to miss the point and power in our personal transformation.

We are the only person we can fix. Until we *see* Possibility, this will seem counter-intuitive. Partners pretty well always focus on fixing or changing the other.

We have grown up learning to blame others in part or in full for our perceived problems. Words spoken in innocence by our parents, such as, ‘You make Mummy sad’; ‘You make Daddy really cross’; ‘You will be the death of me’; and ‘You drive me crazy’ have come to be ‘the truth’ for many. Some of us ‘hear’ those false ideas in our relationships. A lot of us still use phrases like these.

It is damaging to any relationship for us to think about, let alone express how our partner should or shouldn’t be towards us or others. Or how they should be ‘tidied up’, ‘straightened out’, ‘corrected’ or ‘improved’ in this or that way.

Whether our partner *sees* Possibility or not, like every human being they will respond in some positive way to our newly discovered deep feelings of love and understanding. None of us is immune to the power of unconditional kindness. Living in a context of kindness rather than a context of criticism, anger, resentment or bitterness is the most powerful antidote to divorce.

Remember, they are the person we were once in love with (or even if we weren’t) and yes, they may have changed over time in certain ways, just as we have. But we are not looking for them to reinvent themselves. We are instead looking beyond our own conditioning to Possibility and to our own transformation, renewal and that loving feeling found in the realm of fresh Thought.

As water flows when we turn on the tap, the transformation of our relationship will flow as we wake up to *what is* and *see* that we and we alone create our relationships within our own mind, either from Possibility or from impossibility. And that flow increases in exact proportion to us *seeing* the inside-out nature of our everyday experience.

Once we transform our relationship with our self, once our inner world is ‘spring-cleaned’, it automatically follows that our relationship with our partner and our outer world will clean up too.

Seeing our own negative thinking, feelings, behaviour, reactions, and our imagined needs, wants, expectations and desires with new-found clarity, *seeing* them for what they actually are – our creation – is the context, the birthplace of a fresh start. We *see* then that it was simply our past conditioning being re-lived that was driving our feelings and behaviour – destroying our marriage and limiting our life. Now we are free to love again or, as in my case, to really love for the first time.

From personal and professional experience, and the experience of colleagues and clients, the minimum result from the transformation of one partner is that it will enable the couple to separate in a spirit of vastly improved goodwill, to the benefit of all involved, especially (if they have them) their children and extended family.

It can be really hard for us to *see* that we, and not our partner, are responsible for our relationship. Most struggle to understand that, and unless one partner commits to *seeing* Possibility, the divorce statistics will remain the same or worsen.

In relationships, as in any aspect of our life, trying by effort and self-discipline to change old habits is a mission impossible. Once you experience the beautiful feelings that reside in Possibility, you awaken to a new reality, a fresh start to a new life irrespective of your age.

In *seeing* Possibility and manifesting the fresh reality we *see*, we break the chains that shackle us to our past way of relating. We *see* anew our relationship and respond accordingly.

However, are we actually up for *seeing* anew and getting a fresh start? Are our beliefs so invisible to us that we can't *see* them? To what degree do we fool ourselves in thinking we are open to *seeing* afresh?

Read on and you will hopefully find some answers to these questions.

ARE YOU OPEN, CLOSED OR DECEPTIVELY RECEPTIVE?

When I drop all that I believe I know, I become a student of Life. If I live in that unknown, I become who I really am – love, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

As we continue to explore Possibility from multiple angles, let's consider whether we are open to *seeing* through our habitual (and invisible to us) thinking: all those beliefs central to who we think we are – how we think life is and how it should be – according to us.

This state of awareness occurs (and seemingly only ever occurs) when we genuinely do not hold (have surrendered) our position on what is under discussion or what we are reading. It's as if we enter an actual state of not knowing – not believing nor disbelieving – not having an opinion.

It occurs when we no longer think we know what life is about and what we believe is 'the truth' – 'the truth' of anything and everything we hold in our memory as sacred. In my experience, it's at that point we open to and *see* Possibility.

We might be able to 'fool all of the people some of the time and some of the people all of the time', but we can never fool ourselves into *not* knowing so long as we continue to entertain the idea that we do.

I know, what a bummer!

But unfortunately, there is no way around that (as far as I have *seen*) if we want to experience fresh Thought and *see* Possibility.

Can you and I be open to fresh Thought and Possibility when we hold onto the idea that we actually know 'the truth' about any aspect of our life – even that belief, the one we hold so dear, so precious and so much a part of who we think we are? Christian, Muslim, Democrat, Republican, Left, Right, good person, bad person, understood, misunderstood – you name it.

Yes – that 'truth', the one you are so certain of, is the one I am asking you about.

IT IS EASY TO SAY WE ARE OPEN. ARE WE REALLY?

'When the student is ready, the teacher appears.'

Tao Te Ching

It appears that most of us are closed to Possibility much of the time. Paradoxically, this is especially problematic for those of us who genuinely think we are open to it.

We who have explored religion, spirituality, philosophy, psychology or meditation, may find letting go of what we think is 'the truth' harder than most.

Yes, *seeing* beyond our well-considered, deeply-reflected-upon and carefully examined life is especially hard for us. We often develop a quiet, well-camouflaged arrogance and certainty about life and 'the truth'. We are the ones that can don a mask of humility and openness, hiding our belief that we have life sussed – that we know 'the truth'.

If we have become wedded to a certain faith, philosophy, belief or spiritual system, our certainty can be so ingrained that we simply fail to *see* how those ideas have become our daily way of seeing and living life – rather than *seeing* and living life.

We don't *see* that we don't *see* beyond our limiting, once-fresh but now memorised and mesmerising reality!

And as said previously, this can be true if (especially if) we have *seen* beyond the veil of our own illusion in a moment of revelation. We've *seen* into the realm of Possibility; then later, at some point, we stop *seeing*. Not realising that we have stopped *seeing*, we once more start believing – 'smoking our own dope'.

Our beliefs once again are in charge of our way of seeing and engaging with the world. We have gone back to sleep. We have ceased *seeing what is*.

When it comes to being open, it can be difficult for others (and especially for ourselves, if we have stopped looking towards the unknown) to recognise whether we are truly open, or just sounding like, acting like and giving the appearance that we are.

Why is that? Why is it not always obvious when someone appears open but is not? Why do we often get misled by their apparent openness, only to find that they were in fact closed?

I USED TO THINK I WAS OPEN, AND TOO OFTEN STILL DO

We are only ever open and able to truly listen when we bypass our knowledge, beliefs, opinions and judgements as if they represent 'the truth'.

It's both laughable and embarrassing when I think back. And it's a reality check when it happens now, as it still does. It seemed to me that John Wood was an open-minded person. Some might have agreed with my self-assessment. More would have realised how closed I was. Like most, I was blind to my own closed mind. I thought I knew those areas in my life in which I was a closed shop.

For example, I eat a vegetarian, primarily vegan diet and have done so for the greater part of my life. I don't eat any meat, fish, fowl or eggs. I was (and still am) committed to a certain way of eating, and in the past my mind was closed when someone challenged my preference.

No longer do I defend my vegetarian diet. Nor do I suggest or even think that being a vegetarian is the right or correct or best way to eat, even though it still makes sense to me to maintain a vegetarian diet. I enjoy the fun and games when my family, as they often do, poke fun at my being vegetarian and at vegetarians in general – especially vegans!

There were other closed areas, but they seemed, in the scheme of my life, few in number. I regarded myself among the ranks of the liberated, open to life's infinite possibilities. As is so often the case, I was badly mistaken.

According to the 21st-century Collins Dictionary, the word 'open' means 'not closed or barred; affording free passage, access, view; not blocked or obstructed; not sealed, fastened or wrapped; having the interior part accessible'. This definition seemed to fit the way I saw my openness.

My wife, Ronnie, had a different view. She often told me I was closed. She also used words like 'inflexible', 'rigid', 'self-opinionated' and 'arrogant' (views shared by others). It wouldn't surprise me if that was your view of me upon reading this guide. She was correct, but back then I didn't *see* what she meant. My life's journey was about being open. So was my work as a counsellor, coach, advisor, teacher and businessman. I was committed to being open. Where would she come across a more open human being? What was she on about?

One morning, while I was in our stunning south-west forest country, sitting behind a large picture window, soaking in the early morning sun, it suddenly dawned on me that Ronnie was right. My wife and others had been experiencing something about me that I had been closed to – something that I had previously not *seen*. Finally I *saw* what she was noticing.

What specifically triggered that *insight*, I can't recall, but my guess today is that I had been reflecting on something that Ronnie had said to me about being closed.

That morning, long after her first piece of feedback (and countless other pieces), the penny dropped. I had an *insight*. I awoke to the previously *unseen*. I had a fresh flow of Thought. I *saw* that I was, rather than being open, merely being *receptive*. Receptive, I *saw* in that moment, was not open but a *deceptive* way of appearing to be open, deceptive both to me and to others. Receptive had, until that moment, looked like open to me. This *insight* hit me hard!

The 21st-century Collins Dictionary definition of 'receptive' is 'able to apprehend quickly; tending to receive new ideas or suggestions favourably; able to hold or receive'.

That was me! I was generally able to apprehend quickly. I received new ideas or suggestions favourably more often than not. I was able to hold or receive. I was *receptive* when at my best – but no way was I ever truly *open*.

And from where I was now *seeing* myself, the distinction between receptive and open was the distance between Perth and London. I *saw* clearly for the first time that *open* and *receptive* were actually *totally* unrelated.

I understood, in that moment of *seeing* Possibility, how being receptive in fact blocked a person from being open. I will flesh out this enigma below.

What is so darned self-deceiving and possibly deceptive to others is that being receptive can give the impression to both the speaker (you) and the listener (me) that the listener (me) is open. The words 'open' and 'receptive' are often used interchangeably.

Receptivity, like openness, is considered to be a positive quality. But when it comes to being genuinely open, receptivity is as open as closed. In reality, receptive is simply being closed, cloaked in nice, friendly, urbane packaging. A nice smile and a warm disposition can give the appearance of openness.

We can easily convince ourselves that we know 'the truth' of who we are – for years, even a lifetime – and fail to engage with life from the realm of Possibility and genuine openness to Life.

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN OPENNESS AND RECEPTIVITY

We mostly kid ourselves if we think we are listening to another. What we habitually do is listen to our own beliefs, opinions and judgements about what the other is saying or writing, comparing and contrasting as we go: 'I agree. I disagree. Yes. No. Good. Bad. Amazing. Crap.'

Mentioned is the fact that I eat a vegetarian diet. Many vegetarians have a well-earned reputation for being closed, even more than a tad defensive, some even extremely hostile, around the question of eating flesh of any description.

The following three examples look at being *closed*, being *receptive* and then at being *open* in a conversation around the value of eating meat. I'm not saying you have to be open. I am saying that to *see* Possibility you, of necessity, must be open, and being so is a lot trickier than it might seem.

Phil (an omnivore), like James (a vegetarian), is interested in health and nutrition. This is a snippet of three imagined conversations (based on many I've had) with James when he is in a *closed*, then *receptive* and finally an *open* state:

CLOSED – (JAMES NOT ABLE TO *SEE* POSSIBILITY):

Phil to James: 'I just can't see how you are going to get enough protein from a vegetarian diet. My understanding is that you are likely to suffer the consequences in your old age from a sustained lack of sufficient, good quality protein.'

James replies with a much-used response to such a proposition: 'Well, Phil, elephants, one of the largest, strongest and long-lived animals, get enough protein from eating only plants. Being vegetarian doesn't seem to affect their old age. And what about the gorilla ...!'

In this exchange, James is making his usual retort to such challenges to his vegetarian beliefs. James has instantly turned the exchange into a debate, with the discourse likely to escalate into an argument, rather than a conversation where an idea is explored. James is closed – game, set and match.

His reply is adversarial. He will discover nothing new about how Phil sees health and nutrition and about the benefits of eating meat. Nor is Phil likely to gain any potentially useful information around any possible benefits of a vegetarian diet because of James's reaction.

The next example shows how being *receptive* can look like being *open* but is just a clever camouflage, hiding being *closed*.

RECEPTIVE – (JAMES STILL NOT ABLE TO *SEE* POSSIBILITY):

To the same proposition, James says, under the deceptive guise of openness: 'Well, Phil, I have considered the same question many times. I am open to and interested in what you have to say. On the other hand, how do you explain the fact that the elephant, the largest and strongest of animals, eats only a vegetarian diet and lives to a ripe old age? And think about it, the gorilla, much closer to man, is primarily vegetarian. A stronger and longer-lived animal is pretty hard to find among the meat-eaters. But please, tell me more about what you think.'

In this example, James seems, on the surface, much less defensive – and even open to Phil's point of view. You might say he is receptive to an open conversation and discussion. His tone and words are much less adversarial, more engaging. He is inviting Phil to consider his point of view and is even asking for more input from Phil.

James, in this example, shows he is a skilled conversationalist, but behind the scenes his mind is made up. He is trying his best to be open and engaging. But in spite of his pleasant, urbane response, James's mind is still closed. He is convinced (he knows for certain) that vegetarianism is the only diet for humans and, what's more, for the planet as well. He is looking for ways of proving his point. He is not really looking to explore with an open mind, from the realm of Possibility, what Phil knows.

James, because he is holding tight his beliefs around vegetarianism, will discover or *see* nothing new about the possible benefits of eating meat. His mind is still comparing and contrasting, although well disguised both to himself and possibly to Phil, by his deceptively receptive way of engaging. James's thinking is (as in the first example) caught in the trap of knowing (being right) and ultimately disagreeing and making Phil wrong.

This distinction can be subtle and hard to *see*, as most of us, in fact all of us for at least some of the time, are just like James.

And again I'm not suggesting that it's compulsory to be open. If, however, we want to *see* Possibility then being *truly open* is the gateway.

OPEN (TO *SEEING* POSSIBILITY)

The acid test as to whether we are open or not is whether we are evaluating what another is saying or whether we are simply taking their ideas in and allowing them to be.

Again to the same proposition, James intentionally releases his convictions around vegetarianism; puts them aside, as it were. Now, this can be bloody hard to do, but with practice and the intention, it can be done. Remember that *seeing* Possibility is the potential reward.

With authentic neutrality, James responds: ‘Phil, I’m interested in what you know around the value of eating meat. Tell me what you know.’

James in this conversation is genuinely not interested in what he thinks he knows around meat-eating or vegetarianism. He is open to knowing what Phil knows and thinks. He puts his intention into not knowing and really listening to Phil.

The conversation flows, with Phil explaining to James the nutritional and health advantages in eating meat. James continues to ask Phil questions, seeking more information about what Phil knows and how he came to those conclusions. James is not trying to find any weakness in Phil’s position.

James does not give examples of how or why vegetarianism might be better unless asked by Phil to do so, and then he only will if he *sees* that Phil really wants to know what he might think (is open) rather than just being polite.

James’s interest is genuine in finding out why Phil sees value in eating meat. He is not pushing his own barrow of being a vegetarian and has nothing on his mind other than holding the intention of listening deeply to Phil. James is completely open to discoveries around the value of a diet that includes eating animal protein, and more broadly about his new friend, Phil.

This conversation is not about disagreement or even different points of view, as were the first two, although the second one was disguised by James’s apparent receptivity.

This conversation is an exploration by James of the unknown – Phil’s view.

Nor is this conversation about agreement. James is coming from neutrality and discovery – not knowing. He is coming to the conversation from the realm of Possibility – to the best he can in each moment of the conversation.

This doesn’t mean that James will give up his vegetarianism. It doesn’t mean he will remain a vegetarian. It doesn’t mean he has to defend being a vegetarian. It doesn’t mean anything other than he is truly open to *seeing what is* on the other side of (beyond) his own thinking around being a vegetarian.

As a vegetarian for the major part of my life for reasons that make sense to me, this topic of conversation was a litmus test for me on being open. I still don’t always pass the test (if I am tired or

sense that the other person is looking for a debate rather than a conversation). Hand-on-heart, if I recognise that I can't shift to being open, I then joke about the subject, close or change the conversation as quickly as possible. I sure don't want to defend my vegetarianism even though it makes sense to me to be one.

So, being closed is being closed. Being receptive might be listening to what someone is saying with attention and even good grace, but don't be fooled. Behind the scenes, one's mind is stuck in opinions, judgements or evaluative ideas about what is being said based on our beliefs.

No matter what our opinion is, we cannot be having them or judgements about what someone is saying and at the same time be open to them, their ideas, and more to the point ... Possibility.

I'm suggesting that it's not possible, as we are not wired as humans to be able to hold two thoughts in our mind simultaneously.

Being open means we allow free passage, access; our mind is not blocked or obstructed – our interior is accessible. These are the key aspects that make the clear distinction between *receptive* and *open*.

In holding, even feather-lightly, the hidden opinion, 'I don't agree', even though we may appear receptive, we are closed to what is being said while holding an opinion.

And again, don't be fooled. If we hold the opinion, 'I agree', and are truly receptive to what is being said, we are equally closed because we are judging what is being said with a concurring belief, opinion or judgement. We are simply colluding with the other person.

BEING OPEN IS A STATE OF AWARENESS

Being open is experienced in a heightened state of awareness, awareness that has us seeing through and beyond our conditioned mind.

Being open is a state free of opinion, positive or negative – of agreement or dis-agreement.

Open is a state of looking to *see* afresh – not having anything on our mind other than the intention of innocent enquiry. (See Appendix One for more on innocent enquiry.)

Open is being in a state of discovery. To be truly open, we live life from beyond – or maybe it's before – what we know, beyond or before what we believe to be 'the truth'.

To be open, we are in a state of awareness that has our memory, the already formed, relegated to the 'back of the bus'. Being open is when we are as close to the formless as is possible for each of us at our present state of awareness – it is in this state of openness that we are most likely to experience fresh Thought and *see* Possibility. We can call this state of awareness the unknown or the yet-to-be-seen.

If we are closed or merely receptive, what we know is always expressed in the form of 'agreement', 'disagreement' or 'the jury is out'. In that state we are living life from the past, from memory, which is the form Thought has already taken for us. The formless is temporally blocked.

To hold a position, any position (including whether you agree or disagree with this statement) is to be closed, whereas to be open is to be temporarily free of a position (other than the position of one's *best attempt* at being free of a position).

Being in a state of not knowing and simultaneously holding an active opinion or position is a state of impossibility.

When I thought I was open, I was not. I was, at my best, deceptively receptive, and my receptivity fooled me into thinking that I was open. However, I didn't fool Ronnie or many others.

The question that remains is, and be honest with yourself in this moment, are you open when you think you are or are you deceiving yourself, like me, by being receptive? By being polite? By being nice? By being a so-called good listener? By being a warm human being?

Getting into a state of not knowing and being open, the state of awareness necessary for *seeing* Possibility, is entirely possible.

Because our minds are very busy processing our memories and imaginings, it's unlikely that becoming open can be achieved immediately. With patience and in *seeing* our thinking for what it is, we can move into that state of innocence – of actually not knowing.

Exercises in the not-for-profit Possibility Workshop (Appendix Two) explore that state of awareness.

SEEING POSSIBILITY OCCURS IN A STATE OF INNOCENCE

In the state of 'not knowing' we gain a direct experience of life – not the recycled, memorised version we believe to be 'the truth'.

The moment our belief that we know 'the truth' of anything gives way to an innocent not knowing (including every idea for or against the idea of Possibility espoused in this guide), we access a state of awareness in which Possibility (or call it what you will) is set free. Ideas that may never have previously crossed our mind appear in our mind's eye.

In that 'clear-slate state' we *see* via fresh Thought (and the attendant experience of love, understanding, wisdom and common sense alive in that state) rather than through our past accumulations. In this state of awareness, memory is nevertheless still available to us, but as our willing workmate rather than our dictatorial supervisor.

Memory is available to support us as an invaluable resource, but it is no longer our exclusive frame of reference – no longer blinding us to a deeper, more precious, nourishing reality of *seeing* life afresh in the moment. Memory is no longer preventing us from *seeing what is*.

We can never say, nor can the most enlightened among us claim that what we *see* in Possibility isn't influenced by the past – our memories.

As explained elsewhere, what we *see* will probably always be linked to our training, upbringing or strong fascination with something. But we *see* Possibility when we are not blinded by that backdrop – that context – that ground of being that we think is us that hides life's untold treasures.

In a state of mental emancipation, Possibility flies free. Possibility exists for us then, not as an esoteric, mystical, unattainable, *nirvana* state, but as a state of awareness that each of us can move into and experience.

Our direct experience of fresh Thought will transform our life no matter who we are (brain damage aside) or what our circumstances might be (no get-out-of-jail card here).

Seeing Possibility has nothing to do with education, socioeconomics, cultural background or life experience. These don't assist. They just get in the way.

The realm of Possibility is the authentic you-before-you-started-to-believe. It is fresh Thought that enables us to transcend our entire – learned – cognitive system.

It allows us to *see* through all that knowledge we possess that instantly springs to mind that interprets our world for us rather than allowing us to *see what is*.

And our ongoing challenge is that, almost simultaneously, fresh Thought (fresh take, new idea, insight, revelation) once experienced, no matter how enlightening, becomes, in the instant of recognition, more material for our memory.

And that can be the ‘trap of our story’ even for our most revered gurus.

I sometimes wonder if the biblical metaphor of eating the forbidden fruit and falling from grace is simply another way of saying we lose our innocence the moment we start believing.

No matter how wonderful, transformative or life-enhancing our experiences of Possibility might be, they too become the context for impossibility if we see them as ‘the truth’. Yes, everything we know about Possibility is impossibility if not *seen* simply as a pointer in its direction – as a reminder of where Possibility lies – in the eternal unknown.

Bugger, you might say!

If you are still looking for ‘the truth’, it doesn’t reside within these pages. What you might find, if you are open to finding it, is a catalyst to *seeing* Possibility – and the secret to love, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

NOT KNOWING OPENS THE DOOR

'Not knowing anything is the sweetest life.'

Sophocles

While *seeing* Possibility, and the business opportunities that have flowed from that, I never know how I will go about manifesting these opportunities. I don't *see* the precise steps to take, the order in which things are to be done, how the project will be funded, who will do what, how many hiccups there will be along the way, or how long it will take to get the project up and running.

I simply *see* Possibility and, if I decide to pursue the opportunity that has popped into my head, I will more often than not succeed. That is, providing I employ sound financial practices, involve competent people, work hard, persevere and stay open to *seeing* Possibility on a day-to-day basis as each new step is *seen* and taken, each new hurdle jumped.

My experience and the experience of others that I can draw upon, as valuable as that might or might not be, does not get in my way as I head into the unknown. I look towards the yet to be *seen* and *seeing* Possibility, doing whatever occurs to me to do as the next step to take as I move forward with the project – big or small. As stated elsewhere in this guide, I have the experience of others as well as my own – on tap, not on top.

And while I might do some detailed planning, it's never been my long suit. I suspect it might be the same with many creative people. It's as if I plan on the run, working towards and developing the vision *seen*, discovering and gathering up what I need to know along the way and making corrections and adjustments as necessary. But the strategic direction is clear in my mind and, as such, sets the course.

I can only guess it might be the way an artist creates a painting or a composer a symphony. The theme is *seen* or *heard*, and the creative process continues to tumble out of Possibility and unfold.

In case you think that *seeing* Possibility will somehow eliminate the necessity for employing the basic essentials required for success in business or any other field of endeavour – it won't.

On the contrary, our total commitment, unrestricted by the concepts of time and effort, and a willingness to expend whatever energy is needed, remain essential for achieving the opportunity we *see*. And toss in a sound grip of the basics of doing business, or painting or composing.

All of the foregoing is required to ensure the expression of any project *seen* in our mind's eye.

Those three previous paragraphs may seem contradictory to the idea of not knowing. And they are. But then that is what makes being an entrepreneur so fascinating and satisfying, often to the consternation of the people in the teams needed to implement the latest creation. It's living and working comfortably with contradictions, the unexpected and always the unknown.

In a nutshell, we need to be prepared to do whatever it takes within the ethical boundaries we naturally *see* in Possibility. I do not doubt that the opportunity *seen* will materialise if I *see* the vision clearly and truly want it to be.

When we *see* Possibility, there is no doubt in our mind. We'll express that opportunity in concrete form if we desire to do so.

We seem to find it easier to *see* Possibility and recognise opportunity, invent and innovate within a field in which we have a deep interest or an abiding fascination. It's that mysterious play that takes place between the known (our knowledge) and the unknown (the source of creation).

Einstein, for example, didn't create great works of art, nor Monet the theory of relativity. There does appear to be a correlation between our training, experience and fascination for something (yes – all that bloody conditioning I bang on about being in the realm of impossibility), and the area in which we *see* Possibility and create something entirely new. Now how's that for a contradiction?

It appears to me that the mystics, saints, great inventors and innovators throughout history *saw* what they *saw* in the realm of Possibility and discovered what they discovered within their field of deep interest and passion and expressed it within the context of the culture and time in which they lived.

Invention, innovation and opportunity within our area of deep interest flow naturally when *seeing* Possibility. But that very naturalness can put us to sleep too! This explains the apparent contradiction.

The reality seems to be that no amount of training, experience, knowledge, IQ or brilliance in our area of expertise will in-and-of-itself lead to being creative, inventive and innovative within that field.

Seeing into the realm of Possibility and then being *supported* by our training, experience and knowledge (our vocational or 'avocational' conditioning) is what enables us to create something new within our field of interest. And some have a wide range of interests and *see* Possibility in many fields.

We need our knowledge on tap, but never on top. What we already know needs to back us up, not bog us down – supporting us in the background, not burying us in the foreground.

With knowledge on top, no matter how incredibly wonderful and potentially world-benefiting that knowledge might appear to be, it will act as a block to *seeing* Possibility, entrenching the *status quo*.

But the instant Possibility is *seen*, what we know is available to us as a context in forming our next creation, whatever it might be.

Impossibility will continue to trump *seeing* Possibility until we understand how our imaginings get in the way of awareness. In *seeing* afresh we create afresh. In being blinded by what we already know, we stay stuck in that knowing – in impossibility. Simple, but most of us find it hard to *see* that.

IS YOUR KNOWLEDGE ON TAP OR ON TOP?

*To see Possibility, knowledge needs to be on tap,
never on top.*

This guide is an example of how having our existing knowledge on tap rather than on top allows fresh Thought to continue to come through. I will explain.

Seeing Possibility and having you understand what it is and isn't and to *see* it more deeply is my primary fascination in life.

Our collective awareness of Possibility and impossibility is the way for humanity to find its way out of the deepening hole we find ourselves in, the hole my family, friends, colleagues, you and I often find ourselves in.

With that awareness we can actually *see* and avoid holes that were once invisible to us. Or if we do fall into one, we soon recognise that we have, and climb out.

It seems clear to me that humanity would, if Possibility and impossibility were *seen* and understood by sufficient numbers, be largely at peace with itself.

Critically important is that humanity would be in a state of love, rather than in fear much of the time. But even more importantly, we would recognise when we are in one state or the other. Our blindness to our own thinking would have healed.

In the light of that and with the desire to be in service to the common good, I started to write down what I had *seen*.

But what was more significant to me and hopefully to you, is that as I wrote I often would enter the realm of Possibility and out would flow a deepening of my understanding, about which I could write.

This guide, when first finished, was about 20,000 words. I was pretty sure it was done and dusted at around 30,000 words.

Subsequently, as I had feedback and questions from those that I asked to read it, fresh ideas have popped into my mind. These came as I read the comments and reflected on the points I was trying to get across to assist the reader in understanding and *seeing* Possibility.

In my re-reading, reflection and revision of the manuscript, because I was not wedded to my existing understanding, more insights occurred. These insights had never occurred previously, or they occurred in a fresh way. As a consequence, it has grown exponentially to this point, now exceeding 100,000 words.

Having said that, I have decided to stop at this point, even though the creative process is alive and kicking.

If I didn't want to get this out to those that might be interested, it would just keep growing based on further feedback and further *insights*. That process can continue so long as my fascination with sharing *insights* around Possibility remains. So a second edition is on the cards.

My point is that there appears to be no limit to what we can *see* so long as we consciously stay open to Possibility.

And being able to do so is because we realise that we have not arrived at a conclusion; not closed down as a result of believing we have found the 'the truth'.

Coming to a conclusion is the point at which we shut down to Possibility. It's at that moment we become a dogmatic ideologue.

In my various attempts to point you in the direction of discovering or rediscovering Possibility, I sincerely hope I don't sound like one.

IN BUSINESS AND BEYOND – *SEEING* POSSIBILITY BENEFITS THE COMMON GOOD

*'I am always doing that which I cannot do, in order that
I may learn how to do it.'*

Pablo Picasso

It seems that, for a nano-minority of people, the awareness of Possibility emerges in a blinding flash of revelation – the Syd Banks experience.

For most of us, however, it seems that our understanding of Possibility evolves in stages, *insight* by *insight*, as we *see* more often, more clearly and more deeply into the realm of fresh Thought.

Entrepreneurship has been an important thread throughout my life. I'll demonstrate how *seeing* Possibility contributed to success in both my business and private life. And I'll include some of the discovery points along the way – some of the many ways when I failed to *see* Possibility, and also in the earlier years when I was *seeing* it, but didn't realise what was occurring in my mind.

I will also demonstrate how working from Possibility – the state of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense – is *the unrecognised yet most critically important element* in business, not-for-profits and government organisations.

JOINING THE DOTS

'Creativity is the power to connect the seemingly unconnected.'

William Plomer

Seeing Possibility, particularly in our early stages of experiencing that state of awareness, can be a wonderful high. However, if we don't understand what has taken place, we may attribute the cause to some external factor, such as naming it a 'religious experience'. We might, and many do, attribute our revelation to a deity, a past saint or sage.

Without an understanding of what is happening within our awareness, any shift in our consciousness from *seeing* Possibility can have limited stick-ability, if any at all.

Nevertheless, the more we savour and appreciate the beautiful feelings experienced in Possibility, the more we evolve on our journey to progressively higher levels of awareness, setting new default levels along the way.

Having a mentor who understands this process can be very helpful. I was fortunate to have had several on my journey, although, my most powerful *insights* came long after my mentoring stopped. I hasten to add that without mentoring I may not have become sufficiently grounded in my understanding to maintain my intention on *seeing* more deeply into Possibility and subsequently being moved to contribute to others in whatever way that may have been.

Once firmly on the path to Possibility, we revert far less to our earlier dysfunctional thinking, feelings and behaviour. We also recover our bearings sooner. But we still do slip. I have yet to meet anyone that doesn't slip, and that includes those that I would consider to be the most grounded – even the likes of Syd.

To live more of our life from Possibility is a demanding journey of inner discovery, of *seeing* who we really are and, more to the point, who we have always been before we innocently created our memory-based self-image – sometimes referred to as our 'false self'.

I recall with deep appreciation the first time I grasped what was going on in my mind (joined the dots) when *seeing* Possibility.

The place was Tiburon, an attractive little town across the bay from San Francisco. The year was 1992. Ronnie and I were in a training program focused on Thought, Consciousness and the roles of fresh Thought and conditioned thinking in our lives. This program was presented by some of the teachers acknowledged earlier in this guide.

I think it was day three. I had been having extreme difficulty getting to *see* what was being pointed to. And to add to my busy-mindedness and feelings of frustration, several attendees were agitated and vocally challenging what was being presented at that point in the program.

A participant had raised the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians. He was adamant that there was so much more to that than simply what the individuals were thinking and, as a group, what their collective states of consciousness were.

As I recall, the presenters advanced the idea that the problems between the Arabs and Israelis could be solved if the protagonists could *see* that the hatred and conflict was being created, held in place and fuelled by their conditioned thinking in each moment. And until they woke up to that – *saw* what the underlying cause was; *saw* Possibility – the hate, warring and killing would continue.

The presenters' basic proposition was that, to get a fresh start and come up with a sustainable solution, the two sides would need to *see* and therefore understand what is outlined in this guide.

That is easier said than done when beliefs are imbedded from generation to generation and become extremely entrenched – when such a cultural reality is so much part of the conditioned psyche of those involved.

Among the deeply upset and angry were a number of Americans of Jewish and of Arab (I can't recall if they were Muslim) backgrounds. Outspoken individuals from both groups refuted the idea that the problem could be resolved by both sides clearing their minds of the past and starting over.

Getting a fresh start and addressing the multiple entrenched difficulties from a state of Possibility was ignoring the historic and current realities. Both sides maintained that the idea that our reality is constructed in the moment by our thinking was way too simplistic – even juvenile.

They contended that no one could possibly understand the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, and the historic injustice, enmity, distrust and hatred that hundreds of thousands on both sides had for the other, unless one had first-hand experience of the facts.

They were then, back in 1992, thinking, feeling and saying pretty much what the thoughts, feelings and sentiments are today for the countless Israelis and Palestinians (and others involved) – decades on.

For whatever reason, and out of the blue, just before the lunch break my mind cleared and I *saw* that all conflict was created and held in place by the ideas and beliefs we grip and hang onto as if they are 'the absolute truth'. And unless we can *see* beyond or through those concretised positions and *see* Possibility, no peaceful and sustainable solution to the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians could ever be found.

It was clear that war, armistice, treaties, protocols, agreements only provide the illusion of being able to fix or provide a solution to the problem. History shows that all theoretically created and imposed solutions only assist in the re-establishment of the prevailing animosities at the heart of the conflict. Any deals done will only temporarily, at best, paper over the cracks.

Those of us who believe that the desired end – peace – justifies the use of a violent means – war – fail to *see* that violence employed as a means for achieving peace becomes the end result: more violence, sooner or later, in one form or another. *The means is the end.* And so it has been since the beginning.

Kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense, and all that is born from those wonderful qualities, alone bring peace, because the end is always the means employed.

During any agreed cessation of overt hostility, if the thinking remains hostile, a lack of peace consciousness still prevails. Deep-rooted views stay entrenched and the essential point of a sustainable peace is missed. Impossibility thinking cannot lead to peace.

Back there in Tiburon, I was experiencing a significant *insight* and *seeing* a deeper reality than I had *seen* before. I *saw* that everything we think is, in the instant we think it, our reality, the only reality we can know in that instant. And as our thinking shifts, so does our reality.

I realised that conflict is only held in place by the conditioned conflictual thinking of those involved. And that resolution cannot be found within a mind in conflict.

Coupled with that, I also experienced in those moments of clarity and beautiful feelings (feelings that are the hallmark of *seeing* Possibility) that what I had been searching for since I was a kid – to feel that I belonged and was whole – was actually how I was and had always been. I did belong and had always belonged and was whole and always had been whole.

My searching ended. My new life appeared.

Turning to Ronnie, I said, ‘I’m ready to die now. My life is complete.’ I then reassured her that I didn’t want to die. But for the first time, I was no longer afraid of dying. My life in a sense was replete. An aspect of my past thinking, which had been the blight on my life for a long time, had died (in a sense).

We transform to the degree that we *see* into the realm of Possibility, and we come to understand that what is happening within our mind is transforming our worldview – our reality. Being in that realm enabled me to join the dots between seeing life through beliefs, opinions, judgements and knowledge (impossibility) and *seeing* it through fresh Thought (Possibility).

Prior to this time, while experiencing periodic spikes into Possibility, but with no understanding, I went up and then down like the proverbial fiddler’s elbow. It was then, in my late forties, exposed to those hostile groups, that the inside-out nature of the human experience clicked into place.

POSSIBILITY TEAMS

Individuals coalesce into a team as each person feels secure and at ease within themselves. It is then that they see the abilities, skills and contributions of the others and move to act as one united force.

Within the state of impossibility, there isn't any more debilitating thinking than that of fear. The following material fleshes out how fear can be fostered and too often perpetuated under the guise of 'team building'.

With the number of team-building or development programs run across the planet each year, one could imagine that organisations are populated by cohesive, creative, productive, empowered groups of people – teams that are focused on developing and achieving the Purpose, Aim, Mission, Goals and Objectives of the organisation (or of resetting them if they are no longer relevant or if failing to serve the common good), and in the process they are feeling good about themselves, each other, their clients, and are contributing to their fellow humans.

That is clearly not the case. Talk in confidence with board members, senior management, middle managers and line workers of many organisations, and you will find that many individuals do not in any way feel part of the team.

More revealing still, many feel alienated from those they work with, subordinate to and alienated from the organisation that employs them. In the light of your own experience and what you have read thus far, why do you think that is the case?

IS IT TEAM-BUILDING OR SOMETHING ELSE?

'Culture eats strategy for breakfast.'

Peter Drucker

Why is it that so many organisational team-building programs fail to deliver the promise?

Why, not long after the training, does team spirit so often take a tumble?

And why, at the mention of the latest team-building initiative, is cynicism and reluctance to engage so prevalent?

The answer, I believe, is this: in programs that do fail there is a common, discernible thread. The incumbent leader's motives (often hidden from him or herself) are to manipulate staff into compliance rather than actually build a team of inspired, independent, interdependent personalities. Individuals who coalesce for the common good of the team, the organisation and the community.

Why do we, under the guise of building cohesive, creative and innovative teams, harbour – I suspect mostly unconsciously – the intention of creating compliance, agreement and conformity?

Many of us are looking for people to do our bidding, rather than looking for those we engage with to be part of a creative, productive and, more importantly, sustainable team of inspired individuals.

This may come as a shock to some readers, particularly to some leaders. It was shocking to me that day, many years ago, when I woke in a state of Possibility to the fact that I, quite unknowingly, fell into that category.

It was an even greater shock when I tried to think of leaders within the sphere of my life that actually encouraged authentic team development. Leaders with the clarity of mind and the internal fortitude to give up their need for power, control, regulation, restraint and in being the 'thought police'. To be an equal among equals. I could recall only a handful..

I don't say there weren't more, just that I had not encountered leaders that I could say embodied the qualities that facilitated team building. The qualities of fearlessness, authenticity, a unique capacity for deep listening and human understanding. (These four essential qualities in team building, and others, are developed in the chapter, 'Of Two States of Minds – Conscious and Unconscious Leadership').

Why is it that so many leaders end up coercing their people into agreement, compliance and dependence rather than engagement, independence, unconventionality and freedom of spirit?

The answer, I think, is surprisingly simple, so simple that you might easily dismiss it out of hand; and it might be so close to home that you stop reading this guide.

The human fact is that a high percentage of us live our lives ruled by fear, our life experience dominated by insecure thinking. We inhabit – *unseen* by us – the realm of impossibility on a day-to-day basis.

Look to your first-hand experience of how pervasive and dominant fear is in the workplace – at all levels, including within the leadership. Look within your own mind.

As a consequence of experiencing so much fear, people long for security. We look for security in all sorts of places: especially within religious belief, within family, within professional affiliation, within like-minded groups and among friends.

We vote for those we think will protect and promote our interests, our values, our financial future and our cultural heritage. And at work, we try to build teams that will take care of our best interests within the power structures of the organisations we belong to. Fear, not love, is the strong driver throughout society.

CHANGE WITHOUT CHANGING

'No work or love will flourish out of guilt, fear, or hollowness of heart, just as no valid plans for the future can be made by those who have no capacity for living now.'

Alan Watts

Learned insecurity (impossibility thinking) is at cause as to why many so-called team-building programs fail to build teams, to create excellence, and to achieve what is innate, but inactive, within participants.

The *unseen* intention of the training runs contrary to what most, if not all, of us are anticipating, long for and would benefit from. We are looking for something that will help us grow, be the catalyst for us to become more secure, more confident and independent, and at the same time become a more connected, contributing, interdependent part of the team.

What we find is quite different.

If not at the time of the program, then certainly later, many of us feel like a disempowered pawn in someone else's game – the game in which the structure must support the ego of our leader. The program, rather than being set up for the common good, is set up for the good of the leadership. When push comes to shove, we leaders are more often than not (and quite innocently) trying to do the following:

- Build a team that will take care of us, our needs and interests.
- Create an environment in which our team will do our bidding without giving us a difficult time.
- Create a climate in which our employees or subordinates will go along with us even when our thinking and decisions are poor.
- Blindly cooperate with us when we are taking the group in a direction that is not in the best interests of the organisation, the team and the common good, and will probably end in disaster.

Sound familiar?

Many leaders fool ourselves when we say: ‘I want a team of leaders who will innovate, challenge, question me and take the initiative.’ If we meant what we said, we would indeed witness team-building programs that inspire those qualities.

Rather, our thinking is dominated by seeking the illusion of safety, sought through acquiring a team of followers, supporters, cheerleaders, good guys and girls who will basically do as they’re told and make life easy for us.

So what is the alternative? The answer is obvious! Each page of this guide has been pointing in its direction. It is simple when we *see* it, and as simple – yet challenging – to implement the solution.

For us to be a leader who actually builds a team is to be the leader who lives without fear – or at least one who *sees* and understands fear for the imposter it is, and not have it rule our life and ruin our leadership. Leading beyond fear allows for the following:

- **Space** – the psychological, philosophical space in which we and others too can grow, evolve and thrive.
- **Empowerment** – each of us is empowered when free of our conditioned fears. We automatically foster the inherent power that can lie dormant in others.
- **Authenticity and congruence** – again, to be authentic is to be fearless, and being fearless is to be empowered. How often do we hear our political, business, religious and media leaders speak in a way that reeks of inauthenticity, of fear, of disempowerment? It has become the norm. It is certainly the norm in my homeland, Australia.
- **Listening skills** – a quality of listening that fosters freedom and thus empowerment in both the listener and the speaker. We don’t and can’t listen when we are fearful. Poor listening is the most obvious sign of disempowerment, just as deep listening is the most obvious sign of empowerment.
- **Understanding** – a deep understanding of our own humanity. Only in understanding ourselves can we understand others. Empowerment comes from that understanding. We *see* that within the reality of *seeing what is*, there is nothing and never was anything to fear. That fear exists in our minds. It is a product of our conditioning – the home of impossibility, and not a product of what is going on in our environment, circumstances, organisation or any of the countless factors to which we attribute our fear.

For team-building to work, fear needs to be *seen* and understood for what it is. It needs to be recognised for the faulty thinking it is, and be *seen* through to be overcome. Fear at every level – at board level, senior-management level and within the ranks – is an imagined construct of each individual's thinking that becomes group thinking that stymies the organisation.

The question is this: how do we *see* fear as the illusion we create in our minds and, in so doing, move beyond it?

We overcome fear when we *see* with clarity and with certainty the genesis of fear.

We overcome fear when we *see* that fear is a product of our thinking – and not a fact of life created by our surroundings or circumstances. (The likelihood of being eaten by an approaching tiger is not part of the modern world.)

The degree to which we realise that fear is something we have learnt growing up (being recalled in the moment from memory as a habit of our thinking), and is not a result of what is currently presenting, will determine to the exact same degree whether we experience fearlessness.

We become increasingly fearless the more we *see* the illusory nature of our thinking (and therefore the illusory nature of fear). This understanding is a shift in our awareness – a shift in our level of consciousness from disempowerment to empowerment.

Fear and fear alone sabotages us building a team.

Fearlessness is sufficient in and of itself to enable genuine team-building to occur. It is that simple.

Fearlessness is *seeing what is*, not what we imagine it to be.

To understand the genesis of team building and address the common source of fear, to foster safety and build sustainable organisations performing at peak levels, free of stress and worry, the Realm of Possibility Workshop/Retreat (see Appendix Two) is a good next step you might want to consider taking.

And there is no aspect of the human experience more transparent in revealing the prevailing states of mind than in the way businesses and organisations function at the individual and collective level. The following chapter looks into what is behind success, mediocrity and failure in businesses and organisations.

Intuitively I recognised this back in my Fleetwood days; however, with no understanding of what was going on in my mind or the minds of others, it was four steps forward and three-and-a-half back.

THE FOURTH ELEMENT OF BUSINESS AND ORGANISATION: THOUGHT

'The world we have made, as a result of the level of thinking we have done so far, creates problems we cannot solve at the same level at which we created them.'

Albert Einstein

New ideas, fresh opportunities and original ways of doing things spring forth from the realm of Possibility all the time. Some see the 'light of day'. However, most are squandered in minds quickly clouded by impossibility thinking.

One critically important area of society in which fresh ideas constantly occur, which is of particular interest to me, is in the field of business and organisation. Within that context of businesses and organisations (no matter how big or small), I call Thought and its product, our moment-to-moment thinking, 'The Fourth Element of Business and Organisation'.

What follows is how Thought (fresh or in its conditioned state) makes or breaks businesses and organisations.

For simplicity's sake, I have grouped together all of the well-known and equally well-understood elements of business and organisations under the three following headings: SKILLS, SYSTEMS and FINANCE.

AWAY WITH THE FAIRIES – OR SWAPPING IDEAS

Some years back, I was having lunch with an old friend and colleague, a much-respected international business consultant and author. There was collegial warmth and respect between my mate, Barry Urquhart, and myself, but even so, the concept of Possibility I was putting forward took an initial beating!

Explaining the *unseen* was tough. Nevertheless I made my pitch. I said that what is seen by the naked eye is not what creates and sustains or causes a business or organisation to flourish, stall or flounder. Rather, it is the *unseen* that is the creator, 'sustainer' or destroyer.

At a point well into that challenging conversation, my mind, by that point taxed to overload, suddenly cleared. Into that empty space popped the model that follows, which I ultimately called ‘The Fourth Element of Business and Organisation’.

It was the representation I was searching for to describe to my long-time friend what was at cause in the genesis, growth, sustainability, demise and death of any and all businesses and organisations, for profit or not-for-profit (as well as all governments, of whatever persuasion) – and every imaginable aspect of them.

This Fourth Element was the genesis of what was at cause in the greater good businesses and other organisations can contribute to society, as well as the harm and destruction they can equally create.

What follows is the fleshed-out explanation I put to my friend.

AN (OLD) NEW PARADIGM

The quality of our collective thinking alone determines the success, mediocrity or failure of our businesses or organisation and, more critically, whether they serve the common good.

Many claim authorship of a new paradigm, a model so revolutionary that it literally shifts our understanding of and response to the world in which we live and work.

I make no such claim.

Why? Because this model, though unrecognised by most, unnamed till now and mostly unexplained in the context of business and organisation, has existed all along.

It is as ancient as time, and as new as your next brilliant idea.

Yet it's as revolutionary for business and organisations as the understanding of gravity is for aeronautical and structural engineering.

This understanding promises – no, it guarantees – a transformation (not linear change) of the way businesses and organisations are experienced and operated, and consequently their contribution to the betterment of the individuals involved, their suppliers and clients, the community they serve and the world at large.

Will this guide be a catalyst for the genesis of business and organisation seeing the light of day? That is my vision.

Apart from it being at the core of viability and sustainability of any business or not-for-profit organisation – or, equally, the non-viability and unsustainability – more critically, it's what the corporate world and all governments need to understand to restore the health and sustainability of our home – Earth.

ELEMENT FOUR: THE PARADIGM SHIFT OF ITS TIME

You might agree that, in general, corporations (for profit and not-for-profit) and governments at all levels are in urgent need of a new paradigm. That collectively they are presently stuck in one that seems self-serving (bordering on self-destructive) rather than in service to humanity and the common good.

It's because, to this point in the evolution of business and organisation, the first three elements – **SKILLS, SYSTEMS and FINANCES** – are those that receive pretty much 100 percent of management's focus and resources.

I repeat, for ease of explanation I have grouped the various aspects of business and organisation under these three (very broad) headings to deal with the increasing complexity of the world of business and the organisation.

As there is much overlap between elements one, two and three, I leave myself open to being dismissed as not understanding the world of business and organisation. I trust my length of time in and intimacy with that world will allay such concerns as you read on.

These three elements have been highly developed, expanded, analysed, understood and documented. They are indeed essential to the set-up, growth and sustainability of any business or organisation. These three are the nuts and bolts of all institutions (private, community and state) and are tangible and recognisable to each of us, whether we are familiar with business, organisation and government or not.

But then there's the Fourth Element: **THOUGHT**.

At present, its core, all-encompassing role in corporations (large and small – for profit or not-for-profit – private, public or government) is barely recognised, unfamiliar to most and intangible to everyone except those that *see* its omnipotence.

Yet Element Four is both the origin of every business or organisation and the meta-element that creates, formulates and feeds the other three and any and every aspect of them.

- Four is at cause and holds the controls in every nook and cranny of every business or organisation.
- It is the source of every aspect of their beginnings, evolution and unravelling.
- It is the birthplace of success, mediocrity or failure.
- It is the genesis of Possibility and impossibility.

Thought and its product, our thinking, alone determine how practical, productive and beneficial, or otherwise, the SKILLS, SYSTEMS and FINANCES are. There is nothing but Thought at work each peco-second.

As you read on, carefully consider whether this provides the ultimate lens through which to look at and understand yourself, your colleagues, your business or your organisation.

The law of gravity was laced with controversy and disputed conceptual ownership from inception through to an acceptance that it is *what is*. Gravity was intangible, nebulous, and complex. Its discovery was also the paradigm shift of its time.

Likewise, the Fourth Element of Business and Organisation is also without voice and hidden from sight, but will eventually emerge, not equal to but *primary* to the way we look at, understand and go about doing business and operating organisations.

BEING HALF AWAKE

Waking up is seeing that we think, that what we think is our reality, and that our reality is either created within our mind from seeing life through the lens of our past, and thus impossibility; or seeing what is and endless Possibility.

To create context, let's overview briefly the first three elements, the ones we currently embrace as being the prevailing, daily reality for business and organisation. These are the three tangibles we in business and organisations currently expend most if not all our money, time, training and energy on.

We forget, or don't *see* (and, as a consequence, are ignorant of) the primary cause-and-effect relationship between the Fourth Element and the other three elements.

In this, the overwhelming majority of us leaders of businesses and organisations are half awake. We see and implement these tangibles as our priorities; however, as a consequence, we lead ultimately 'me too' organisations doing the limited best we can see to do.

We don't recognise the genesis of success, mediocrity and failure and, at the level of cause and effect, what it takes to optimise the value of the other three elements.

The primary force at work, in reality the only force at work, and the one that strategic plans and mission statements and internal policies and procedures neglect or make obscure reference to, is left unharnessed. Little wonder then that businesses and organisations experience so much trouble surviving (let alone thriving), and have difficulty fusing what their leaders *say* in these documents with what they actually *do* on a day-to-day basis.

Following (to ensure clarity around my intention) is a summary of the three elements, with an expansion on the fourth:

Element One: Skills

Skills are the fusing of human ability, training, knowledge and experience, expressed through the many levels of proficiency brought to the business or organisation. Accounting, welding, selling, engineering, writing, medicine, training, sewing, supervising, building, programing and deep-sea diving are all skills.

Skills are the *crafts* we use that, in concert with how awake we are to Element Four, determine the level of effectiveness in designing, producing and delivering our products or services.

Element Two: Systems

Systems are the amalgam of human-created procedures, processes, plans, routines, practices, policies, programs, methods and models used within the business to operate and manage it.

Systems are the *concepts* devised for running the business or organisation at optimal efficiency and effectiveness. They are developed and achieve their purpose – again – to the degree we are awake to the Fourth Element and its pivotal role in: a) their creation, b) optimising their use, c) rendering useless all systems, and d) all of the degrees of utilisation or non-utilisation in between.

Element Three: Finance

Finance takes many forms: stock, debtors, creditors, leased or owned buildings, plant, machinery, equipment, locations, hardware and the entire infrastructure utilised in doing business and operating organisations – including all of elements one and two. It is the *capital* employed and deployed to fund the enterprise. And yes, how well employed or wasted the financial resources of the business or organisation are depends again on how awake we are and *seeing* into the Fourth Element.

Now within the working context of these three broad categories, let's look at what's foundational to them – the Fourth Element of Business and Organisation: Thought.

ELEMENT FOUR: THOUGHT

There is nothing but Thought. Everything else is the result of it.

Thought is the intangible, invisible but ever-present **context** from which each individual creates their life and performs their various roles for better or worse.

It is the creative force behind elements one, two and three, and it alone determines the degree to which each works for or against the organisation and the common good.

Thought is the *ground of being* from which the organisation grows and functions well, or self-destructs from the dysfunctional thinking of its people.

Element Four is the invisible power behind the creation and effective use of the Skills (crafts), Systems (concepts) and Finance (capital).

It's the source initiating the birth, growth, sustainability, decline and death of all businesses and organisations and each person within them, from backroom to boardroom.

The degree to which Thought is recognised and capitalised on as being the *sole* determinate of everything (good, bad and indifferent) in the business or organisation is a function of the level of awareness, of the collective consciousness, existing within the organisation.

Element Four alone is the moment-to-moment working reality of the enterprise, and it alone governs how the affairs of the business or organisation are conducted.

Elements one, two and three are all created by and subject to Element Four in each moment and in every aspect of their creation, utilisation, decline or reformation.

Yes, I know I have discussed this part to death – dismiss the message at your peril.

SO BLOODY WHAT?

The lack of consciousness is all that ails capitalism.

In a world where hard-headed, no-holds-barred decisions seem mandatory, businesses and organisations might well ask, ‘What has Thought and our awareness of it got to do with our very real, very tangible, very pressing imperatives?’ (You could well be saying: ‘John Wood, what a deluded flake you are.’)

In response to the likelihood of that thinking, I offer this reflection: *the state we are in – Possibility or impossibility – indisputably determines the path on which we walk (every one of us) at every level of the organisation: the high road or the low road, a state of Possibility or impossibility. The two paths travelled to ultimate success or failure.*

The quality of our thinking is the *only* factor at work (for better or worse) throughout every organisation on Earth, from charperson to chairperson.

Thought *alone* rules – not the market conditions, not our competitors, peers, subordinates, supervisors, board, customers or suppliers. Nor do our bankers, government regulators and their regulations and taxes rule. It is not an outside-in world, and all of these are outside of our world, our control.

In a state of impossibility, it seems to us that they do determine our success, failure or otherwise – that we are the victims of the ever-shifting circumstances of our life.

In another – a state of Possibility – we *see* that it is us, not ‘them’ or any other external factors that determine our success or failure, happiness or sadness.

The ‘buck stops’ with us.

It’s our thinking; it’s our internal environment, not our external environment, not the economic or the myriad other circumstances we find ourselves in, that determines how we handle our job and therefore how creative, efficient and effective we are in each moment, or how we have been in every preceding moment. And whether we now *see* the *what is* of each opportunity or threat, or see only our imaginings of them.

To realise that the prevailing state of consciousness within our organisation (individually and collectively) is to *see* and understand what the ultimate meta-influence is on our business and organisational environment. To be awake to that fact is to be at the peak of our human power to

influence our organisation in our most creative, constructive and productive way and its contribution to the common good.

But this meta-reality has to be *seen* by us individually for it to have legitimacy in our awareness.

Our awakening to and therefore our understanding of Thought and how it, and it alone, is in charge of the organisation enables that legitimacy. Consequently, that consciousness, that state of awareness enables us, one by one, to utilise this core power for – rather than against – the business and organisation, and for – rather than against – the common good.

To harness its power, we must first wake up and experience the sweetness of that reality.

AGAIN: WHAT IS THOUGHT?

Our understanding of Thought determines our access to Possibility.

Any explanation of this phenomenon will only be useful to the extent that it stirs the reader's own contemplation – and your own *seeing* into Possibility.

Thought (in its unformed or energetic state) is the energy, the Life force enabling us to live and experience life as human beings. This energy is detected by an EEC machine. That process is called electroencephalography. It is this electro-physiological monitoring method that records electrical activity in the brain. That reading signals if we are alive or dead. Without brain activity, death is declared.

Thought manifesting as a combination of original ideas and useful memorised ones creates and sustains our organisations. Thought, manifesting as only useful and useless memories, sabotages and destroys them.

Our collective thinking, therefore, manifests each nanosecond throughout every nook and cranny of our businesses and organisations in ways that contribute to success or failure.

Original Thought (fresh or original thinking) is the unrecognised and thus underutilised resource in all that we do. It's underutilised because we lack the understanding of its value. Not only in the area of invention and innovation, but also the qualities of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense that come with it.

At the same time, our creative thinking (original or fresh Thought) is disruptive. Fresh Thought questions, challenges and throws the spotlight on the *status quo* and has us constantly assessing the value and relevance of what we are doing, and if found wanting, *seeing* new and improved ways forward.

Impossibility thinking (our memory/conditioning) – if in charge – blocks that creative source of renewal.

Fortunately, impossibility thinking never survives the flow of fresh or original Thought. And so it is up to us to consciously pull the metaphoric plug on our past (even from a moment ago) to allow that fresh flow of Thought.

As explained elsewhere, although we get fresh ideas, for most of us, these fresh ideas are related to what really interests us. A football coach will get a fresh *insight* into how to play the game in a way it has

never been played before, which wins his team a premiership. A yacht designer comes up with a revolutionary keel design, which contributes to Australia winning the America's Cup, a cup that was held by the USA for 132 years.

Now, if that coach doesn't stay creative in the way he strategises and coaches his team, he won't continue to be successful, because just as the winged keel contributed to success, other fresh ideas, innovations and new strategies took the cup from Australia four years later.

That formed state of our thinking, as critically important and as necessary as much of it is, remains the realm of impossibility until we actually understand Thought as the wellspring of our reality (either fresh or recycled) – as either Possibility or impossibility.

We can either *see* life afresh or we can unconsciously recycle our memories, seeing life only through the prism of our past and everything our past represents to us.

Our understanding of the primacy of Thought in our life is the degree to which we see with clarity the cause and effect of all that we think on – our feelings and actions and the world we are creating in each moment.

SO BLOODY WHAT – YOU MAY STILL ASK!

Dismiss the omnipotence of Thought at your peril.

The degree to which we *see* our own and everyone else's thinking as the determinant of every aspect of business and organisation determines how successfully we can recognise Possibility and impossibility in our self and in others.

HOW?

Failing to understand that Thought and its product, our thinking and our feelings and actions, have ultimate control over the business or organisation constricts the organisation's potential, at the very best; or destroys it, at worst.

In short, whatever thinking we are experiencing in each moment reflects the way we are *seeing* or failing to see how we are creating our reality, our life, our business or organisation, our world. Our thinking reflects the extent to which we are awake or asleep as human beings, as conscious or unconscious individuals.

WHAT IS MISSING IN OUR UNDERSTANDING?

To this point in our evolution, Thought is not widely *seen* as being the wellspring (the critical element) of our business or organisational life (and every other aspect of our life).

It's true that Thought's manifestations – concepts such as attitude, creativity, determination, adaptability, persistence, love, gratitude, etc. and their opposites – are all seen as important but are considered, examined and explored as if they exist without a single, primary cause.

However, the *source* of those and our entire noble and ignoble personal attributes, Thought, is barely understood and therefore hardly recognised, at least within the world of business and organisations.

How Thought manifests in and through us is yet to be *seen* as the basis of success and failure – of sustainability and unsustainability.

Consequently, few leaders capitalise on the unlimited potential that this understanding holds for their organisation and the common good of humanity.

Whether we *see* it or not, Thought plays out in the workplace and in the world through the lives of each of us, every nanosecond of every day, as either life-affirming or life-denying.

Following are examples of the cause and effect of Thought on the other three elements.

THE THREE ELEMENTS REVISITED: EACH CREATED BY THOUGHT

Each aspect of our life is a reflection of Thought.

ELEMENT ONE: SKILLS

If we haven't yet *seen* that we habitually create our reality via our conditioning, that is our impossibility thinking, our performance may reflect high skill (like William, the lawyer), but overriding that will be our counterproductive thinking and therefore our unhelpful behaviour.

However highly skilled we may be, as William was, if we are dominated by our past – our knowledge, beliefs, opinions and judgements – and especially if they are less than helpful, we are stuck with an equally-less-than-helpful attitude.

For example: we may be judgemental and critical of subordinates, threatened and intimidated by peers, or obsequious and submissive with supervisors. Or maybe we are a mixture of these.

On the other hand, experiencing life from Possibility and consequently released from our habitual insecure thinking, we *see* our co-workers in a new light of goodwill and cooperation. Our contribution to our fellow travellers is exponentially more helpful and our life more enjoyable. We are free to relate as equals – neither superior nor inferior.

Even if we only possess average skill but are not imprisoned by negative beliefs, opinions and judgements, we are at peace with, open to and supportive of others. We live mostly from that healthier state of awareness.

Free to *see* Possibility to whatever degree we do, our contribution to our organisation is, on balance, beyond our skill level.

We respond well to training, are open to Possibility in all its manifestations, and are a pleasure to work with. We are simply helpful, kind and decent. We enjoy our work and life in general and are sought-after as an employee, as a friend and as a boss.

In short, our attitude (a direct reflection of our level of self-awareness) amplifies our contribution to our organisation in either a constructive or destructive way, regardless of our skill level.

ELEMENT TWO: SYSTEMS

Businesses and organisations want to stay current or, better still, ahead of the curve, and therefore they want to introduce systems that work more efficiently and effectively.

However, often these attempts fail.

Why?

There are many reasons attributed to this failure, but each can be traced directly back to one – impossibility thinking.

If people's thinking sabotages any stage – i.e. the exploration, acquisition, introduction and/or use of these systems – the organisation will not derive the benefits from the advantage those systems can provide.

And in a competitive environment, organisations must strive to improve, or go backwards. If we're one of these saboteurs, we can and do frustrate the sourcing, implementation and use of new systems. We may even be in a position of sufficient influence to block the idea from even getting to the exploration stage.

And then there's the belief that a new, better or more sophisticated system will fix the problems created by poor attitudes. That won't work either, and it will be a waste of money and other resources. These problems will not be front-page news to anyone that has worked in a business or an organisation.

Conversely, an organisation with outdated or inadequate systems, but whose people happily make the most of what they have and work the system to its optimal potential, will stay competitive. These are the people that make up, to the extent possible, for deficiencies in an outmoded, inefficient system or technology.

Any system is neutral in and of itself.

It is what we humans do or don't do with it that has it contributing to or subtracting from the smooth running, increased productivity and success of the organisation.

ELEMENT THREE: FINANCE

Again, it isn't uncommon to see a large organisation with the finest plant, buildings, and capital resources outperformed by a smaller, under-resourced one with a more creative, dynamic and happy workforce.

Outperformed, that is, by Possibility-seers who respond to their customers, to the marketplace and to each other. These can-do people are more likely to *see what is*, rather than viewing circumstances through their beliefs, opinions and judgements.

The oft-used, now very old example of Microsoft and IBM is still relevant today.

Bill Gates's approach and offer to IBM were rejected. Gates was *seeing* from the realm of Possibility. IBM was living in the past, looking at what he was offering through the veil of impossibility.

In this instance, at the least, the creative, innovative thinking that had enabled IBM to become so successful had given way to habitual 'business as usual' impossibility thinking.

When *status quo* (impossibility thinking) rules, Possibility goes AWOL. The Fourth Element was not engaged in a creative way by IBM.

Lack of finance didn't affect the thinking that created the platform for PCs. That discovery was born in a garage. The amazingly successful Microsoft was the end result.

And what a contribution to the common good that organisation has made and continues to make to this day. Even its detractors concede that point.

ELEMENT FOUR: THOUGHT – THE SOURCE OF POSSIBILITY OR IMPOSSIBILITY

Within us individually and within our organisations collectively, the quality of Thought we utilise creates, underpins and determines all organisational outcomes, good, bad or indifferent.

The clarity with which the board of directors, CEO, the senior-leadership group and each and every member of the organisation recognise the all-encompassing role of Thought in the life and vitality of the organisation determines the extent to which the business or organisation is best served.

In summary: Thought rules supreme.

Each individual, you or me, and the collective states of mind (the weight of numbers either experiencing Possibility or impossibility thinking) within the organisation determine:

- the organisation's capacity to create, innovate, implement and sustain;
- whether there are sufficient numbers who *see* and understand the outcomes sought to deliver the promise implicit in the organisation being in existence;
- whether sufficient individuals have personal and organisational goals that are in synergy;
- the quality and effectiveness of internal and external communications;
- the quality and effectiveness of teamwork;
- the climate of commitment and goodwill towards all stakeholders;
- whether conflicts are created and how they are resolved;

- the degree to which colleagues let go of the past and open up to fresh ways of working and interacting with each other;
- how members foresee and respond to market conditions;
- whether the organisation contributes to the common good or subtracts from it;
- the bottom line – success or failure, profit or loss. Thrive or wither.

Use the checklist below to assess the prevailing collective state in your business or organisation. I encourage you to consider your own state first:

- Do most individuals take 100-percent responsibility for the performance of the organisation – of ‘delivering the promise’?
- Or is delivering the organisation’s promise hit-and-miss?
- Do most understand what ‘delivering the promise’ actually means?
- Is moving the organisation forward like wading through molasses?
- Is making a decent profit (return on investment) like a mission Impossible?
- Are market conditions and shifts in them seen and experienced as an opportunity, and responded to?
- Are conditions not seen, or maybe seen and experienced as a problem too big to deal with, or simply deemed irrelevant?
- Is stress or anxiety common?
- Is staff turnover high?
- Does your organisation have high absenteeism?

- Do your people have irregular work patterns?
- Do you have productivity or performance issues that go unaddressed?
- Is 'passing the buck' or shifting the burden of responsibility to others common?
- Are market conditions (downturns, interest rates, lenders' demands, competitor discounting, the government, world conditions) used as a reason for the poor performance of the organisation?
- Is a lack of follow-up and follow-through a problem?
- What is the level of initiative, creative-idea generation and the quality of business development within the organisation?
- Are conversions from enquiries to doing business a problem?
- Are customer-service standards low?
- Is customer loyalty a thing of the past?
- Is there cooperation between individuals, departments, branches, divisions?
- Is the quality of your product or service down on what it needs to be?
- Do workers feel they can achieve a seamless work and family life to enable them to contribute more effectively to both?
- Is there the environment for creating a healthier workplace in your company?
- Is there a high level of vitality and wellbeing in your organisation?
- Is alcohol abuse or drug-taking a problem?
- Above all else, is your business or organisation providing goods and services that are sustainable and serving the common good?

No matter what your position, from apprentice to chairman of the board, understanding the Fourth Element is what enables you to facilitate the development of yourself and simultaneously contribute to realising the potential of the organisation as a whole.

As explored throughout this guide, *seeing* Possibility is exhilarating and never fails to contribute to all involved.

The following chapter explores the states of mind around what we commonly call ‘attitude’. One state, a state of Possibility, has us being in service to others and makes life easy for us. The other state, impossibility, is not in service, and our experience of life is anything but easy.

BEING IN SERVICE AND ‘DELIVERING THE PROMISE’

‘I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy.’

Rabindranath Tagore

For some reading this guide, it may seem as if a life lived from Possibility means flying without a compass or rudder. From another perspective, one may notice essential themes and practical imperatives. A critical one of the latter is that of *being in service* and *delivering the promise*.

Possibility and being in service go together; they’re doorways to each other.

Implicit in working in any organisation, whether self-employed or employed by another, is an implied promise.

That promise is simple: my job is to be in service to the customer, client or patient to whom I am offering my goods, services or care. I will deliver on that promise at all times to the best of my ability and capacity. Having this understanding is at the heart of being successful. Successful in whatever we undertake – from brain surgery to picking strawberries.

Development programs presented to organisations aimed at raising service standards do their best to deliver on that promise. In my experience, too many programs fail in their endeavour. The unrecognised reason for their failure is that the core aspects of the Fourth Element, which is Thought and its states of Possibility and impossibility, are not understood and therefore not addressed.

Without that understanding, the results of any training are hit-and-miss at best and, at worst, counterproductive.

Those that don’t need the training may benefit by learning some new skills.

Those that are regularly blinded by their impossibility thinking will most likely not be touched.

The point of being in service will not be realised at that deeper level in the minds of those participants. As the consciousness of being in service was not already awake in them, skill training will not stir that awareness. The information delivered will be just more stuff piled onto the hapless individual. That is, unless the inherent value of being in service strikes home within the awareness of the individual. This claim is made as a seven-decade student of observing myself and others, when in and out of service.

Decades before understanding Possibility, at age six, starting in the family shop weighing potatoes, sugar and salt, and stacking the refrigerators with perishables, I have been on the frontline of many types of service organisations. And like you, I have been a customer since that early age as well.

The defining difference in each of our attitudes to customers/clients/patients (and everyone else in our life) comes down to this. Are we in a state of service and delivering that implicit (but mostly unstated and even less appreciated) promise of the business or organisation we represent. And continuing to do so irrespective of whether the owner, manager, our co-workers and those that we serve and serve with have an understanding that such a promise exists.

Instead of pointing us towards the state of awareness and thus the change of heart required for that to occur, programs often deliver ideas of how to manipulate behaviour – our own or that of others.

An example is being asked to act as if we care when we don't, or using cleverly created, tried and tested language that can coerce our client into acting in a way that isn't necessarily in their best interests.

Sometimes such training programs end up being the catalyst for despair, ill will and failure among staff, with participants never getting to understand the critical importance of being in heartfelt service. They never *see* how our state of awareness determines what we deliver – heartfelt or otherwise.

We can *pretend* to be in service, or we can *actually* be in service. We either have the feeling of goodwill – or we don't.

Service delivery has become poor within too many organisations. And there are some standout exceptions that we encounter and delight in.

The reason heartfelt service appears to be in broad decline is simple: service is understood and therefore taught as being simply an act of behaviour. Behaviour that is incorrectly represented as being independent of our state of mind; of the thinking and feelings that you and I might be experiencing – as being something that can be taught from the outside-in. It can't!

It is not generally understood that the state of being in service is inherent in each of us. It's the way we are born. Being in service is not accessible from our intellect.

And all that is required is for each of us to tap into that state of authenticity. That state of Possibility. Being in service exists before the type of contrived behaviour that many trainers try to teach. Being in service is the natural way for us to behave.

Being in service flows from the higher level of understanding pointed towards in this guide, a state of service consciousness – not something we can switch on or switch off. It is *who we are* when in a state of Possibility. Or a virtue we have discovered in Possibility that becomes a useful part of our conditioning.

I sometimes wonder if the notion of *being in service* has been lost over the past several decades from the input of tens of thousands of trainers (and owners and managers) across the planet believing that behaviour-modification training (of organisational people of all types) is what makes the difference.

Or is it simply that poor service providers (impossibility thinkers), as a result of not knowing what is at work within our minds, have just outpaced those who are ‘delivering the promise’? They have outpaced them to the point where poor service is so common that it has become the expected norm.

Has it become the conditioned reality within businesses and organisations whose people no longer care about that crucial connection with their ‘bread and butter’ – their clients, patients and customers?

I can’t answer those or the numerous other possible reasons posed by others for the global spread of inferior service, but I can say that being in service emanates from a kind, caring state, a state of being where service provision is a ‘labour of love’.

Therefore, it can’t be delivered unless we understand and have *seen* reality from the realm of Possibility – the realm of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

Too many of us have become stuck in impossibility thinking. Too many of us are lost in our opinions and judgements around whether:

- we should be in service,
- that particular client deserves our service,
- being in service is below our station in life,
- being in services makes economic sense, and so on and on and on.

‘DELIVERING THE PROMISE’ RESULTS FROM BEING IN SERVICE

*‘The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself
in the service of others.’*

Mahatma Gandhi

It’s a commonly shared belief that by teaching good service behaviours or by sharing good ideas, we will experience a fundamental shift, and transform our attitude.

But teaching suitable behaviours or trying to instil new or better ideas allows only for superficial and temporary change, if that. It’s much like transferring water from one vessel to another: the shape and space is changed but not the actual make-up.

Being in service, on the other hand, goes hand in glove with our innate philosophy of living and is consistent with our core attitude towards our fellow man.

What we need to address then is how to get in touch with our core philosophy, the one inherent in every human being, the one we are born with – love, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

Being in a state of service generates a remarkable feeling – a feeling that has us giving of our heart. It is who we are in essence, a reflection of our innate nature. We have not just changed vessels; we have ‘turned water into wine’.

So what value does that have in the real world?

In a dog-eat-dog marketplace, the world of hard-nosed organisations and ruthless competition, can we afford to be in service? What if I work for a manager who doesn’t give a damn? One who might see the client as ‘fair game’ – to be fleeced.

Its intrinsic worth can perhaps be illustrated by looking at three ordinary people in real estate, an industry that, in theory, is all about being in service to clients.

We’ll explore the thinking of each of these real-estate agents. At the same time, let’s contrast their thinking and behaviour with the way we might think and how our thinking in that state would influence the service

we would deliver. And more broadly, let's reflect on how our state of awareness would impact on our life in general. Let's *see* if we can recognise our self in all three states.

THE THREE FACES OF SERVICE

In each state, let's imagine our job (and, it follows, our life in general) very differently. In each case we will see how these differing states of mind determine the service we provide and the quality of our life in each state.

In the first example, we are an agent 'out of service'; in the second we are 'providing conditional service'; in the third we are 'being in service' or 'delivering the promise' – these latter two terms being used interchangeably.

I could draw examples from any and every field: clergymen to mayors; lawyers to people on the checkout; shearers to teachers; plumbers to professors.

The same is true for each of us when we *see* what being in service really means.

We could even look at various shades between these three states of mind – but the point, I trust, will be clear!

Real-estate agents have a job that throws up unique challenges. That is why I picked them. Most who try it don't succeed. Agents work odd and often extended hours in meeting the demands of their clients – sellers, buyers, and those just 'having a look'.

Add to that fierce competition, often difficult market conditions and all the usual demands of being in business. You come up with a job that by its nature demands a lot of those who take it up.

FIRST: I AM 'OUT OF SERVICE'

I'm certain that I know how the world works, but I never wonder why it doesn't work so well for me.

When 'out of service' in dealing with the sale and/or purchase of property, I see the client as an obstacle to overcome, not a partner in a mutually rewarding undertaking.

My focus is on how much commission is in the deal and how quickly and easily the deal can be done. With little or no joy in my work and relationships, my *modus operandi* is to achieve the desired outcome with the least possible input and effort.

In this state of mind, I avoid interactions with my client. I don't understand that my approach, in reality, is working against my aim of earning commission. As strange as it sounds, I'm unable to connect the dots between the quality of my input and an optimal outcome.

My attitude towards the customer might be summarised as 'putting up with the bastards'. Day-to-day my feelings run the gamut of stress, anxiety, resentment and often anger. Underlying these emotions is my fear of not getting the listing or the sale, and thus the commission.

In dealing with this hollow existence, my coping mechanisms often include alcohol or drugs, gambling or having affairs. These are methods I use to experience a 'nice feeling,' and are short-lived and self-destructive.

My job, as you can imagine, becomes increasingly hard over time as my work and life habits deteriorate. Sleeping in late, taking in a movie during work hours, long lunches with more drink than food, or hiding behind paperwork in the office are common practices for me.

I find anything preferable to actually being in service because I don't know the intrinsic value to me and my clients in being so. Working under mental strain, I typically avoid keeping my buyer or seller up to date on progress.

You might question my longevity operating in this mode. Surprisingly, some of us survive and a few of us (the clever, cunning and manipulative) can be successful, albeit only in material terms. The personal cost to my relationships and to me is huge.

Most of us entering real estate don't start by being 'out of service', although some do. If, as a new agent entering the field, I don't understand what state of mind it takes to deliver the promise, I may well finish up out of service.

Because I don't *see* that my state of mind is (and always has been) my problem, in being out of service, I will blame the nature of the industry. I'll hold market conditions, the company I work for, responsible, and I will especially lay blame with my clients – those 'bastards' – the buyer or seller.

If it is suggested to me, I consider 'delivering the promise' and being in heartfelt service as 'Pollyanna-ish'.

Or maybe being in service simply lies in an unknown or a once-known state of my mind that I have lost sight of.

SECOND: I PROVIDE ‘CONDITIONAL SERVICE’

If it's conditional, is it really being in service?

In providing ‘conditional service’, I recognise my customers as being important. Yes, I realise that without them I would not earn a living.

My attitude is one of doing the best I can in the light of the prevailing circumstances and coping as best I can with people’s failings.

I know I must provide good service or lose out. My level of understanding is described as ‘enlightened self-interest’. The emphasis is, nevertheless, on *self*-interest.

However, I don’t understand the deeper point behind that phrase.

Some of the everyday feelings I may experience are:

- great excitement at success;
- deep disappointment at failure;
- stress from the effort it takes to maintain conditional service;
- indignation and hurt when customers don’t respond positively to my efforts;
- a sense that I am often at the mercy of others.

For about the first year, I enjoyed my job, but now find it tougher and tougher as time rolls by. Increasingly, I am experiencing what is called ‘burnout’ and, if I endure, I feel sure I will become bitter and cynical, and finally leave the industry.

Or worse, I will shift into the ‘out of service’ state of mind. And if somehow I manage to maintain some reasonable perspective on other aspects of my life, the pleasure in my job fades to zero. It gives way to going through the daily motions or carrying on through sheer hard grind and self-discipline.

To maintain some semblance of a decent life, I develop life-coping mechanisms such as working out at the gym, jogging, yoga, meditation or reading self-help books.

I am unaware of the state of ‘delivering the promise’. And if and when I do glimpse it, I don’t understand it and therefore can’t readily access that state. If I shift into that state of mind, I’m not aware of what’s occurring in a way where it leads to a transformation of my experience of my job and my life.

In addition to the high percentage of real-estate agents that fall into these first two categories, many of us within our own field of endeavour fall into them as well.

Whether we are a nurse or a courier, it doesn’t make any difference.

Particularly in Australia, we fall short on being in service, and there is much conversation about this. Not to mention the mountain of commercial material written about the poor quality of service offered and the large training industry that has developed around trying to improve it.

As said, it is ironic that we who complain so much about poor service mostly fall into these two categories within our own work, even within our relationships.

Being on the receiving end of poor service doesn’t mean we wake up and *see* the source of being in service – that state of awareness where we naturally, without *thinking*, ‘deliver the promise’.

THIRD: BEING ‘IN SERVICE’

*‘The most persistent and urgent question is:
What are you doing for others?’*

Martin Luther King

Being fortunate enough to be ‘in service’ and ‘delivering the promise’, we experience our job and life from an entirely different vantage point. We regard the customer and those near and dear, and humanity as a whole, with respect and understanding.

Being in service, we seldom complain about the customer; when we do, we catch ourselves and feel a touch of chagrin.

We know that we too are a perfectly flawed human being who also gets into a low mood and ‘stuffs up’ from time to time.

And we are grateful that we have joined the dots and understand that the quality of our thinking is the sole determinant of our sense of wellbeing and our capacity to be in service. We acknowledge that our thinking reflects Possibility or impossibility and is not a reflection of our circumstances.

In general, our attitude is one of goodwill and generosity of spirit. We recognise and embrace the big things we need to do, and equally embrace the little things with the same diligence, commitment and enthusiasm.

Our working context is that, while it is important to get the big deal or attend to the lucrative customer, it is as important to sort out the small after-sale matter with an aged pensioner or assist the client wanting to rent an inexpensive unit (even if rentals are ‘not our department’).

For us, being in service isn’t determined by the amount of money involved, rather it is determined by our core feelings of kindness and understanding and the level of wisdom and common sense we experience.

We don’t need coping mechanisms, as we recognise that the source of any stress or upset starts and finishes with us. We’re it. And knowing that it is the quality of our thinking at any point in time that enables us to maintain our bearings, and if perchance we lose them, we know how to recover quickly.

DOORWAY, NOT DOORMAT!

Delivering the promise requires us to have the same attitude of goodwill towards everyone; it also means not counting the cost.

Being 'in service' doesn't mean we are obliged to take on everyone's problems, be burdened with copious detail or assume others' responsibilities. Neither is it an invitation for anyone to wipe their feet on us.

Evaluating, comparing, contrasting and minutely counting the costs of service are not part of our life.

For us, going the proverbial extra mile is just another mile, a natural occurrence, nothing out of the ordinary. It is not a big deal. It is just the way we live in assisting and supporting our fellow traveller on our own journey of living.

In 'delivering the promise' we are appreciative of our job, the organisation we represent, and the industry we are a part of.

Cynicism, hard-heartedness and ill will are not part of our experience. Goodwill, feelings of gratitude and connectedness are all natural thoughts and feelings we have.

As said, we do not need coping devices to maintain our bearings or to stay sane. We recognise stress for what it is: a state of mind in which we take life too seriously, where we are preoccupied with the outcome or fretting about the past, rather than enjoying the process in each moment of Possibility (actual or potential).

We *see* that our view of our job has nothing to do with the prevailing conditions, circumstances or the amount of business on hand or lack thereof.

By being in service, we are generally light-hearted and filled with good feelings. Our mind is a doorway to a better experience of life.

PHILOSOPHICAL DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THREE STATES OF MIND

Being truly in service is a state of Possibility.

OUT OF SERVICE

We are stuck in our habit of dysfunctional thinking – a state of impossibility. Like a car with serious mechanical problems and in need of a major overhaul, we splutter along, often making a lot of noise.

Self-absorbed, calculating and ruminating, our mind is troubled and seldom at rest. We are constantly distracted by thoughts such as ‘What’s in this for me?’, ‘This is a bloody nuisance, I have already called him five times long-distance’, ‘How can I get them to do the deal right now?’, ‘I don’t care who pays for this stuff-up but it’s not going to be me.’ This line of thinking is our daily diet. Lost in our conditioning, our thinking is of poor quality, to say the least.

Annoyance, frustration and judgement hound us.

PROVIDING CONDITIONAL SERVICE

We are like a car requiring a good tune-up before it can run smoothly again. Far from broken down, it can still do the job, but burns more fuel, leaks oil and shows signs of wear and tear. It has become far less pleasurable to drive.

We innocently think we know which side our bread is buttered on. Our mind is busy and analytical. Worry is a regular companion. Hurt feelings or disappointment occur regularly.

For example: we take it personally and get upset when a sale falls through or our clients give their property to another agent to handle.

Our thinking runs along these lines: ‘They don’t appreciate how hard I have tried’; ‘What do you have to do to please some people?’; ‘Life isn’t fair’; ‘I have to be on my guard’; ‘People are fine but they will let you down’; ‘I must sacrifice or fail’.

We recognise to some extent – certainly more than agents in the first example – that we are at cause in making our life difficult. We will tend to read the latest motivational book or display posters that say,

‘The tough get going when the going gets tough’; ‘Go the extra mile’; ‘Smile and the world smiles with you, cry and you cry alone’.

We don’t realise that we are impacted for no more than a moment by reading a positively worded poster, and then only at a very superficial level.

We haven’t reached that state of awareness where we *see* that our thoughts and feelings are internally generated, and not caused as a result of what the client may or may not say or do in relation to us.

Nor do we realise that *we can’t be deeply impacted* by reading a guide such as this until we *see* beyond the words and *see* Possibility for ourselves.

We might well be into positive thinking, affirmations and similar ideas. These (as explained elsewhere) may sound the same but are a world away from how an agent in example three *sees* life.

Hard work, discipline and exhausting effort are constant companions, and often we are searching for the answer to what ails us. We are on track to having a better experience at work and home but haven’t *seen* the role of Thought and our thinking, and we don’t understand the power and peace that lie within the realm of Possibility.

Anxiety is often our companion.

DELIVERING THE PROMISE

For us, being in service is simplicity itself. Instead of having to analyse each moment, day, week or year, we take life as it unfolds. Setbacks, rejection, complaints and problems are seldom taken personally unless we lose our bearings, and then we lose them, only for a short time.

Nor do we take success, plaudits and breakthroughs personally. We *see* everything as life in action, all as impersonal pieces of our life unfolding in whatever way it does.

Our predominant state of awareness is one of gratitude and appreciation. We ‘don’t sweat the small stuff’, and we *see* that virtually everything is small stuff. We have what others might describe as a philosophical view of life. As regular visitors to the realm of Possibility, we may *see* the opportunity and create our own business.

A feeling of gratitude is a primary feeling.

THE KEY TO BEING 'IN SERVICE'

'Only a life lived in service is a life worth living.'

Albert Einstein

In a state of 'delivering the promise', i.e. of 'being in service', we *see* that attitudes (our own and others') are a direct reflection of each person's thinking, of each person's philosophy of living in that moment of delivery.

We *see* that our attitude is not a reflection of our upbringing, circumstance or anything external to our capacity to think and create our personal reality in each new moment.

We are aware that we can be raised in an 'unsupportive' or 'negative' environment, yet have a 'positive' attitude and, equally, be raised in a 'supportive' or 'positive' environment and have a 'negative' attitude.

We *see* that our degree of self-awareness and that of every individual is the determinant of our attitude – positive or negative and all shades in between.

We also recognise that 'luck', in its infinite manifestations, is not the cause of us gaining or losing a state of inner peace.

We understand that what is going on in our mind (what we are thinking) is what creates our personal experience – an experience of peace or inner turmoil and all shades in between.

We are *seeing* or *have seen* into the realm of Possibility, even though we may not know it by that or any other name. However, we are aware of the 'inside-out nature of the human experience'.

We understand that, regardless of how life appears, it is the quality of our thinking, feelings and actions – a state of Possibility or impossibility – that determines whether we are 'in service' or not.

We understand that our reality is an internally generated experience (and is unrelated to our specific circumstances). We see that it is Thought (whatever we are thinking) that is causing our feelings, whether happy or sad, peaceful or desperate.

We who deliver the promise experience life events with a very neutral view. Setbacks, rejection, misadventure, or acknowledgment and a run of successes or failures are all *seen* with an understanding of neutrality and held lightly.

We *see* that our experience of life, our personal reality, is what we create from the gift of Thought. That while there may be a physical reality, a set of circumstances out there, our personal experience of life, the way we see or *see* any set of circumstances, is always exclusive to us. Our reality is 100-percent subjective – our creation alone.

Our personal reality (the only reality we will ever know) is truly an inside-out created process. What we think is what we see or *see*.

THE INSIDE-OUT NATURE OF IT ALL

'The deed is everything, the glory naught.'

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

As we *see* with growing clarity that our moment-to-moment experience is determined by Thought and the quality of our thinking in each millisecond, we become increasingly philosophical. That new *seeing*, in turn, leads us to become less disturbed, psychologically, by life's whims.

As a result, we feel happier more of the time, and when we don't feel so good, we understand that the cause isn't what is happening in our life but rather what is happening within our head, the thinking we are entertaining.

Happiness, equanimity and a feeling of goodwill and connectedness to our fellow man increasingly become our way of life.

This equanimous state of awareness is our natural condition – for all of us human beings to experience when our minds are not fixated on any belief, opinion or judgement. For all of us, released from our self-created prison: our conditioned mind.

It is impossible for us to be in healthy psychological functioning and not be in a state of service. It is equally impossible for us to be in an unhealthy state of mind and to be genuinely (not in adapted behaviour) in service and delivering the promise.

Providing 'conditional service' is preferable to being 'out of service', but it's only a thought away from being 'out of service' – *but also* only a thought away from 'delivering the promise'.

Each is a seamless next step. One, you might say, is a step backward (into the past) – if we don't understand the nature of Thought and *see* our thinking for what it is. The other is a step forward (into *seeing what is*).

We, who *see* our personal reality as being internally created, and *see* our imaginings for what they are, enjoy the peace of mind that comes with that understanding. We will naturally be 'in service', as that is who we are, no matter what walk of life we are involved in.

At worst, say, on an off day when our mood is low, we may drop to providing ‘conditional service’. We will recognise that our thinking is off and maybe struggle through the motions of being in conditional service. But this increasingly becomes the exception. The more awake we are, the less we are bothered by what is unfolding in our life.

However, we who provide conditional service as learnt behaviour for getting what we want will be at the mercy of our unrecognised thinking and mood swings. On a really good day (say, following an inspiring sales meeting) we may be in service and enjoy the wonderful feelings that go with that state. But because we don’t understand the inside-out nature of the human experience, we may put it down to circumstances such as a big sale, luck or things just going right – or ‘getting out of bed on the right side’.

On an ordinary day our job will be much harder than it need be, and on a bad day (say, following a really bad sales meeting or a difficult meeting with a client) we may drop to being ‘out of service’.

Whether we are selling real estate, preaching to a flock or working with a jackhammer, being ‘in service’ is a state of grace.

A state less than that will result in us going through the motions at best, and at worst taking advantage of the implicit trust the client has in us to ‘deliver the promise’.

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR

'Prophets are those who take life as it is and expand it. They refuse to shrink a vision of tomorrow to the boundaries of yesterday.'

Joan Chittister

For me, *seeing* Possibility and the improbable opportunities in business has been a blessing; however, it was not and is not a panacea (as many may think) for a contented life. And it hasn't always appeared to me as a blessing.

Earlier on, with my lack of understanding of Thought and Possibility, it sometimes seemed a curse. As I started yet another new venture, still with all the existing ones on the go and tight on capital, I would slip into mental overload. Lacking sufficient knowledge of what I needed to do, I would worry and fret over having taken on more than I was capable of handling. I didn't know back then how to re-engage with that nice feeling – that state where everything is possible and doable.

That may also be true for some reading this who have been unaware of how we create our states of mind. Such is our journey when we *see* Possibility without being grounded in our understanding of fresh Thought and the alternative – seeing life through the influences and constraints of our conditioning ... of impossibility.

Having glimpses into Possibility but without having woken up, we can become consumed by our thinking around the opportunities we have *seen* and created. This was the case for me until my late forties.

We lose the clarity and perspective we initially experience when *seeing* Possibility. As mentioned earlier, in those days I spent a small part of my life experiencing Possibility and the rest in a less kind, less understanding, less wise and less common-sense state of mind.

So 'be careful what you wish for' before getting too excited about *seeing* Possibility. It takes time and often (as was the case for me) some coaching to *see* the distinctions between living our life from the healthy state experienced in Possibility consciousness and living life unconsciously from our conditioned past.

I repeat: a counsellor, mentor or coach who understands Thought and its primacy in our life will be helpful if you are ready to *see* beyond your beliefs.

Experiencing and understanding Possibility can and will, if truly *seen*, turn your life upside down!

This ‘turning upside down’ happened for me again in 2013, when I was reading the article on global warming I touched on earlier.

Although I’d read many such articles, what was said this time gripped my thinking (or, better put, my thinking gripped what I was reading). I slept fitfully, unable to stop ruminating on what appeared to be happening to our planetary environment. I reflected on what the consequences might be if the climate science was correct, for my grandchildren and their offspring, and if the present trend was not stalled and reversed. I was lost in my fearful, conditioned state of mind.

I was wrestling with the idea that if the anthropogenic warming of the planet is a primary causative factor, how would I answer my grandchildren when they asked, ‘If you knew what the science was saying would happen to Earth from our contribution to global warming, why didn’t you do something about it?’

At around 3 am that morning I had an *insight* and my life shifted.

Ronnie and I had been investing considerable time, energy and financial resources into reducing our carbon footprint in various ways at home and in the cars we drove. Ronnie drives a hybrid and I drive an all-electric powered by our rooftop solar panels.

As concerned individuals, we had played our minuscule part – but it was no longer enough. I *saw* that I had to bring to bear my experience and energy in a new field of endeavour. And this field was one in which I had little experience and very limited knowledge (nothing new there, as you will have read).

More importantly, I *saw* that a new approach was needed to cut through the confusion, resistance, doubt and downright antipathy towards creating a sustainable, stable society that was no longer dependent on the increasing consumption of greenhouse gas emitting fuels.

And I *saw* that I needed to be part of creating that approach. That’s what I mean by our life being turned upside down!

The challenge for me, as it is for many, continues to be to *see* more clearly into the realm of Possibility.

Our task is to *see* with increasing clarity how *Thought alone creates our reality*, and therefore we need to recognise that the physical or situational circumstances of our life are never the determinant.

It can be disconcerting to briefly visit a state of fresh Thought, *see* Possibility and experience the accompanying beautiful feelings, and then fall from that grace-filled state of awareness.

Having fallen from that state of grace and to be living (even temporarily) in a greatly restricted psychological state, we may forget (or may not have discovered yet) that we are creating our world through the life-giving energy of Thought in whatever state we are in.

We don't *see* Possibility during those times, and instead continue to see and experience our life and world through the distortions of our past conditioning ... through our fears and the isolation of our beliefs.

My daily yoga is to look in the direction of fresh Thought and live each moment in a state of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense. Some days or parts of days, I do, and some days or parts of days, I don't. That's just the way it is. But once we've *seen* it and understand it, Possibility beckons us back. Its pull is irresistible. *Seeing* and experiencing life from that vantage point is home.

What follows is, in a way, a range of examples of what has been said in different ways already. It further illustrates how we play 'The Game of Living', become lost in the game and temporally or more permanently disconnected from Life.

LIFE AND ‘THE GAME OF LIVING’

‘ ... for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.’

William Shakespeare

WHAT IS ‘THE GAME OF LIVING’?

It is the way in which you and I live out our life, day in, day out. Whatever we do, our moment-to-moment activity is us playing ‘The Game of Living’.

Writing this book, parenting, earning a living, being on the dole, building a bridge, farming, seeing a therapist, lying on the beach, eating lunch, breaking and entering – whatever we engage in, we are playing ‘The Game of Living’. We are acting out our thinking and feelings.

There is nothing but the game for you and me, until we die. And all the stuff we make up about death is just another part of the game we play.

WHAT ABOUT LIFE?

As far as I have *seen* and experienced, Life might be the spirit, essence, source or vital spark of everything imaginable, including you and me and the source of Thought.

I only imagine that, as I don’t know, nor do I pretend to know and nor do I adopt other’s perspectives, prosecuting their ideas, claiming them as my own.

As I *see* it, no matter what we get up to, whether it’s making love, shopping at the market or killing someone, it’s all part of Life manifesting in and through us. The so-called good, bad and indifferent!

Life (whatever Life might or might not be) seems to manifest within us with complete impartiality, total neutrality; and from what standpoint we experience and live our life depends on our state of awareness or lack of awareness – Possibility or impossibility.

As far as I can *see*, ‘Life and The Game of Living’ are one and the same, and manifest along an imaginary continuum of Thought-created reality emanating from within our mind.

Everyone and their every act is Life manifesting in ‘The Game of Living’.

At one end of this imaginary continuum is impossibility; at the other, Possibility. At the extreme end of impossibility is what we might see and name as evil, and at the other is what we might *see* and name as pure love, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

WHEN WE BECOME LOST IN THE GAME

An aspect of the human condition is that we become lost in the game (actually lost in our conditioning) and innocently gravitate towards impossibility.

How?

The answer to that question is as simple as it is profoundly liberating if we can but *see* it.

Each of us become lost in the game, within our beliefs, opinions, judgements and knowledge of ‘The Game of Living’ we are playing, whatever that game is.

Such is the case, without exception, in whatever game we might be playing at any moment in our life, from child-raising to growing cabbages to nuclear science. When we become lost in the game, our experience of life becomes highly personalised (egocentric) and disconnected from Life.

We become lost in the maze of our knowledge and conditioning – the so-called good, the so-called bad and the so-called indifferent. In that state of mind, we are separated from the simple, inclusive, holistic, unlimited experience of Life by our poor use of what might be described as the gift of Life to our life: Thought.

Adrift in the sea of our accumulation, we miss *seeing* Possibility and the higher vantage point that fresh, unconditioned Thought provides us with.

We see only impossibility, although most (all of us at times) are unaware of that. And, many of us would dispute that assertion vehemently.

We are certain that we see Possibility. Unbeknown to us, we aren't seeing Possibility as pointed to in this guide. We're seeing our conditioned, very personalised reality, one of impossibility.

At our extreme, we fight to the death to maintain integrity with our conditioned beliefs. Throughout recorded history, martyrs are a prime example of how extreme our thinking can be.

Still today, martyrs are blowing themselves up in the name of God.

Martyrs are people just like you and me who have become lost in their conditioning. They absolutely *believe* that the game of martyrdom is more important than their life in the here and now – *seeing what is*.

Martyrs believe that their conditioned thinking, their beliefs and blind faith – not that far removed from the sort of stuff we all make up – is ‘the truth’.

Played as if it represents ‘the truth’, every game can negate or deaden our experience of Possibility. We become consumed by our thinking about and around the game being played, disconnected from Possibility, separated from others and from nature.

We have innocently moved into a state of impossibility thinking, all the while believing that we know better, that we know ‘the truth’ of the matter, and that our game is the ‘true’ game.

ISIS, at the time of writing, is the prime example of martyrdom *du jour* – although, those who have a different belief call them ‘terrorists’. And that is understandable.

WHY IS THIS OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE TO US AND THE COMMON GOOD?

Once proclaimed as 'the truth', every revelation, every idea, no matter how profound, can (and most often does) become a battering ram in the hands of believers.

Without ongoing and regular fresh *insight* into whatever game we are playing, even a game resulting from a mind-transforming epiphany or the most profound revelation will morph into just another '-ism'.

The profound idea, philosophy or deeper *insight* into Life we had becomes installed as our code of belief and conduct – as being 'the truth'. As a commandment from God!

The original *seer* of any transformative philosophy may not fall into that trap. Some do – I've witnessed three over a period of several decades that, from the expression of their thinking (that is, their words, feelings and behaviour) seemed to lose, at least temporarily, their connection with Possibility - kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

And history shows that many of their followers get caught, seeing the message delivered as representing 'the truth' (the realm of impossibility) rather than the message being simply a pointer to Possibility and to their own deeper experience of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

Seeking compliance, obedience, submission and conformity to their ideas becomes a corruption of the purity of revelation originally *seen*, rather than being the catalyst for *seeing* deeper into Possibility and ongoing personal transformation and evolution to higher levels of awareness.

An ever-deepening experience of Possibility comes from *seeing* the game, any game, from the vantage point of fresh Thought and, thus, union with Life.

When *seeing* any game free of the contagion of our past, our accumulated ideas, beliefs, opinions, judgements and expectations, including *all our insights and most profound revelations*, we are experiencing life from the realm of Possibility.

In that state of clear-mindedness, we are free to play the game wholeheartedly and equally, and probably more importantly, we are free to drop any game immediately if it no longer makes sense for us to continue to play.

As was the case for me with Climate Action Now.

SOME GAMES THAT PEOPLE GET REALLY MAD ABOUT, OR EVEN KILL OR DIE FOR

*When we lose our connection with Possibility – with Life –
we become lost in 'The Game of Living'.*

What follows illustrates some of the games of living we play and the unintended consequences when we get lost in them and see them as 'the truth'. These are games most of us play to a lesser or greater degree.

THE RELIGIOUS GAME

Might the metaphor of eating the forbidden fruit and falling from grace simply be another way of saying we lose our innocence when we start believing?

I can only guess that each of the world's great religions was inspired by a person who had *seen* that Life and 'The Game of Living' were one, inseparable and indivisible.

They *saw* Possibility, I imagine, in a deeply clear way. They had a profound experience of Possibility.

It appears (according to historical records) that almost from the birth of their revelation, deity, dogma, ritual and religious belief, opinion and judgement were created around what was *seen* and experienced by the discoverer.

Stories were made up to suit the prevailing culture so the citizenry might benefit, or maybe to be controlled by the holders of 'the truth'.

It would seem that for most followers, the discovery by the founder (of what I call Possibility) morphed into the followers playing the religious game (within a state of mind of impossibility). The inner discovery by the founder gave way to external religious teachings, becoming Canon and a man-made code of conduct, rather than remaining all it could be and as a pointer to our inner world of fresh Thought and a deeper connection with Life.

Not all follow in that way. Some continue to look within, seeking and experiencing the deeper realisation for themselves. They too may *see* Possibility. They too may *see* (to a lesser or greater degree) that which was *seen* by the founder – into that realm of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

You may notice from your own observation and experience that religious practice is more often than not lost in the game of religious practice. That is why many followers become so disaffected. New games are set up with new rules to follow. Mostly nothing changes, as people once again get lost in their new religious game.

THE RACIAL OR GENDER GAME

We are unconscious of the fact that our views of ourselves, of others, and of the world, are formed by looking through the preconceived notions of our past.

Black, brown, white or yellow skin, blond, black, straight, curly or no hair; physical, ethnic, cultural, sexual or other differences are elements of Life manifesting in each of us.

Many get lost in physical, sexual, religious and cultural differences and play 'The Racial or Gender Game'. The result is the impossibility we witness in varying levels of social disquiet. This is particularly evident as this guide nears completion in 2018.

Others *see* beyond the illusion of difference. *Seeing* Possibility, they are at peace, embracing their discovery of Thought and Possibility, moving beyond the misleading concepts of tolerance or acceptance.

Seeing tolerance and acceptance as the phony concepts they are, they *recognise* that implicit in the concept of tolerance is the notion that there is something or *someone to be tolerated*, something or someone that is not equal to (or better than) us.

In a state of Possibility, we *see* that acceptance comes into being if there is someone who is, or might be considered as *unacceptable*, someone that we should, according to our code of conduct (if we claim that we are a good and decent person), *accept* as another good and decent person.

We recognise what those words actually imply (a refined and unrecognised version of intolerance and non-acceptance).

We *see* a kindred spirit and embrace them as another version of ourselves – of Life manifesting as a person experiencing, in that moment, Possibility or impossibility.

THE NATIONALISTIC GAME

*Discovering we are not who we believe we are is
at the heart of seeing Possibility.*

We easily lose ourselves in nationalism, too. For a majority, national identity is a fabricated illusion of uniqueness, superiority or inferiority, of greater courage or intellect or less of both, or having some special level of resilience, etc.

We can hear these beliefs expressed by journalists and commentators every night of the week on TV news or current affairs, as they describe the actions of their people in the way they are handling a natural disaster, or dealing with a major tragic event, or play and win or lose a game of sport against another nation. They describe themselves in heroic terms – as if they handle a situation better, more competently, more caringly or more heroically than any other nation.

Nationalism morphs, for example, into a collective belief that sees us having sovereignty over a piece of the planet, of having the right language or a history unlike any other, or the ultimate economic system, etc.

The amalgam of these and other beliefs creates a state of mind of division and separation from other nations, as the collective within nations collude in taking their thinking seriously, playing the nationalistic game, and in doing so failing to *see* the destructive consequences of such widespread group thinking.

As I am writing this, we in Australia are witnessing a period of growing nationalism, with sayings like ‘It’s un-Australian’ – whatever that means – or being part of ‘Team Australia’, whatever that implies.

But it’s safe to say that being special, different and unique is implied as part of these expressions of nationalism. Separating ourselves from others who aren’t special, different and unique like us is our conditioned response to the story we make up about others, and ourselves – a story that we believe to be ‘the truth’ about ourselves as a nation.

The joy, wonder, beauty and simplicity of Life give way to defending and justifying things cultural and national. We go to war. We glorify our war involvements and increase that glorification as the years pass, preparing ourselves for yet another war.

We enshrine beliefs that bear no resemblance to what actually happened. Those beliefs get enshrined and embellished as part of the story we create over time. Those who actually participated, I suspect, would probably squirm at how we came to think about what happened in the way that we have. How distorted it has become.

We may compete for, or covet, other nations' assets.

Hatred and persecution are generated against voices that are seen as unpatriotic, against people who, for instance, burn the national flag (a piece of coloured cloth symbolising our commitment to this particular game).

Lost in nationalism, we become separated from other nationalities, all of whom we share Earth with. And all of whom, like us, are who they are by the simple whim of Life.

In *seeing* Possibility we observe that some folk are Chinese and others are German, South African or Indonesian. Full stop! No attributions of meaning or judgement. The joy and wonder in Possibility is that we discover our capacity to appreciate and embrace all human beings.

THE POLITICAL GAME

*Being right and making others wrong is
impossibility politics.*

Political parties of every hue – groups and movements of this or that persuasion – play the political game (not unlike the religious game) in an attempt to apply salve to an ailing humanity.

And as in all games, players in this one come to see their ideology as the right, best and only way to play. They too lose sight of the deeper reality that it is just a game in which they are trying to do the best they can.

As with the nationalistic, religious, racial and gender games, millions of people can and do get hurt, disadvantaged, swept aside and downtrodden and disenfranchised in this game.

Past and current histories demonstrate that the political game fails to deliver the promise implicit in its often-inspired creation.

In not *seeing* Possibility, players fail in nurturing and supporting Life (in all its manifestations) from a place of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

One ideology or group dominates until it and their limitations are recognised and another takes its place ... and on and on it goes with seldom a solution in sight.

Politics is one of the more obvious and unnecessarily destructive games. No more really needs to be said on this, does it?

THE FAMILY 'BLOOD IS THICKER THAN WATER' GAME

If we had a child that was not of our making and didn't know that, would we love it any less than the one of our making?

This one may not be as obvious.

An example of destructive and divisive thinking is the family game in which the 'blood is thicker than water' notion is played out. Family members can easily lose themselves in this game, becoming blind to their beliefs, opinions and judgements around family bloodlines, and in so doing limit (at best) and (at worst) destroy relationships.

Then there are parents who *see* beyond this game, adopting a child from another culture, family or place, and they love and embrace that child unconditionally. Parents who *see* through the distinction between the adopted, fostered or stepchild and the biological child can love each fully and unconditionally.

Paradoxically, love – possibly the ultimate experience and manifestation of Life – cannot coexist with opinions, beliefs, judgements and expectations. When family members *see* that, understanding, wisdom and common sense lead to true love in all blended families.

THE CAREER, BUSINESS AND COMMERCIAL GAME

*If our identity is tied to success and accumulation,
we miss seeing Possibility.*

Working for others or our self is just a game, too. It's an essential game for most, a way to put food on the table, a roof over our heads, and pay the increasing bill load of modern families. It can also be a way to challenge ourselves and make a contribution to the common good. For some it's perhaps a way to achieving fame and fortune.

This game (like all games) means different things to different people. Some revel in it, some dislike it, some think of it as necessity, and others simply reject its premise entirely as a blot on society.

Played from the spirit of Possibility, this game makes a positive contribution.

Played simply for money or power, this particular game can be destructive, desperate and dirty. Playing this way will negatively affect staff, customers, shareholders, community, government, the environment, the economy and future generations.

Experiencing and playing the career, business and commercial game from the realm of impossibility separates players from their deeper connection with Life and Possibility. It becomes a game of *all about me and mine*.

Playing this game from Possibility ensures that it fulfils its role in our society and contributes to the common good, as fleshed out elsewhere in this guide.

THE SPORTING GAME

In a state of mental emancipation, Possibility flies free.

One could be excused for thinking that professional (or even amateur and children's) sport is no longer a game in the traditional sense of what we think of as a game, of fun, competition and recreation. And that it's morphed into a combination of 'The Nationalistic Game' and 'The Career, Business and Commercial Game' or 'The Game of Winning' at all costs.

Many players, administrators and fans have lost the sense that it is still a game, nothing more and nothing less. When fans go on rampages of violence, ridicule opposition players or cheer when one of them gets injured, or at junior level when the umpire is assaulted because of a decision he or she has made, it is clear that the essence and beauty of Life is missing from their reality! It has become extreme; some might say an almost life-or-death undertaking.

Participants, fans and nations can and do become lost in the sporting game.

Government and business exert ever-increasing influence.

Advertisers vie for huge audiences.

Governments mistakenly believe the nation's self-esteem is somehow at stake.

Players are paid homage to, revered as modern-day heroes – even gods – and rewarded with mind-boggling sums of money, celebrity status and cult worship.

But played in the spirit of Possibility, it is the antithesis of separation and division, uniting and uplifting both participants and spectators alike – win, lose or draw.

THE SO-CALLED SPIRITUAL GAME

Personal discovery occurs from within, not accessed from without.

Some of us desperate to reconnect with what we think is the essence of Life, and experiencing the feeling of being lost in the religious game and various other games, seek to play what we believe is the ultimate game. The game to end all games: the spiritual game.

Participants in this game often set out to be totally free of dogma, of ritual and rigidity. They genuinely want to play one that is unconditionally loving, inclusive, gentle, nurturing and supportive of life. Participants may have recognised – and many more experienced – the shortcomings in their religion of origin.

As a consequence, they have searched for kindred spirits to connect with and create a new world of love, understanding, wisdom and common sense. It's one likely played by some readers of this book. It is certainly one once played by me. And readers might think it is a game I still play.

In playing the spiritual game, if we are awake enough, we will *see* over time, in actuality very little time, that once again those involved have become equally lost (just in another way) in our new game.

We *see* that we and our cohorts have started taking our new beliefs personally, seriously, rigidly. And because of this, we may set up rituals, a canon or a code of conduct, and sometimes we even put in place the 'thought police' to ensure we all think, feel and behave as we should ...

Becoming exclusive, opinionated and dogmatic in how the game is controlled and played, we are once more trapped, and just as lost as if we were playing the religious or any other game.

That's how it is when we believe we have found 'the truth'.

PLAYING ‘THE GAME OF LIVING’ FROM POSSIBILITY

Our experience and performance is optimised when playing from the Realm of Possibility.

What happens when we play any game from the love, understanding, wisdom and common sense experienced from the Realm of Possibility?

All people (brain damage aside), irrespective of their past, present or future experiences, have an innate state of profound understanding. We all have a state of awareness that transcends all games (beliefs, opinions, judgements, knowledge and all conditioning).

Some call it our core nature, others call it our spiritual nature. Could it be that Jesus was referring to this very concept when quoted as saying, ‘The kingdom of God is within you’?

It appears that unless we’re afflicted with a medical condition that precludes us from accessing the Realm of Possibility, there are no exceptions to realising this level of healthy functioning.

This state of awareness manifests the instant we truly *see* all our beliefs, opinions, and judgements (including any you may be developing around the notion of Possibility) as the figments of our memory and imagination they are.

In this state of awareness, we make common-sense, clear-headed and wise engagements with whatever Life presents. In touch with this healthy state, kindness, understanding wisdom and common sense prevail. We *see* ‘The Game of Living’ from the Realm of Possibility.

Being right and making others wrong gives way to a deep listening to how each of us plays our particular games. A feeling of connectedness to others and an easy resolution of problems and differences take over rather than an exacerbation and escalation of perceived disagreements and complications.

Possibility is the state of awareness in which we don’t take ourselves seriously. We *see* ‘The Game of Living’ from a vantage point of wisdom and common sense. We’re no longer lost in the game and disconnected from Life. In this state of awareness we can be very studious and totally focused on the game we are playing, and at the same time riding easy in the saddle, having fun on the journey.

In that state of psychological, philosophical and spiritual wellbeing, our mind is quiet.

In that quiet state, we (at the very least) recognise the duality that seems to exist in our lives.

With our mind truly stilled, even for a moment, we *see* through that duality and experience Life and 'The Game of Living' as one. At that moment we are experiencing Life and 'The Game of Living' from the realm of Possibility.

TWO EXAMPLES OF PLAYING AND TRANSCENDING 'THE GAME OF LIVING'

There's 'Life' and how it manifests as 'The Game of Living' – it's only our concrete thinking that creates division and separation.

Bob (formerly an engineer in another country), working as a cleaner here in Perth, felt very dissatisfied with his job – just one of many ways he felt disconnected from Life.

Thinking his job demeaning, Bob was lost in 'The Game of Justifiable Discontent'. He grumbled, complained and got upset easily. His disgruntlement permeated his life.

But the instant Bob *saw* his beliefs for the impediment they were (and the state of impossibility he was living in) to *seeing* fresh Thought (and Possibility), he experienced a deep sense of gratitude for his life and, with that, for his job. He started to enjoy playing 'The Cleaning Game', which up until that point had appeared so distasteful to him.

In realising that whatever he works at is simply a form of 'The Game of Living', with the same potential for discontent or contentment, Bob was free. He was free to stay and play 'The Cleaning Game' or leave to play another. His 'poor me, I'm a victim' attitude disappeared.

Whatever Bob decides, or circumstances might dictate, he now *sees* that 'The Cleaning Game' or any other game is not linked to his sense of wellbeing or his appreciation and gratitude for Life.

As a result of his *insight*, he experienced a feeling of gratitude for what he actually did have. Bob gained a new perspective on what's at work in creating his sense of wellbeing or discontent.

The same was true for Jane, a doctor. Thinking she was more important than the nurse, patient or visitor, she was as lost in her Game as Bob was in his.

Disconnected from Possibility and the feeling of gratitude that flows from that, Jane was caught up in 'The Game of Self-Importance'. This one is along the lines of, 'I'm better-educated, more intelligent, my job is more important', etc.

The instant Jane's mind cleared, she too *saw* that she was no more or less important than anyone else. She experienced a sense of humility that transformed her relationships with colleagues, patients, family and friends.

Life was experienced with a newfound appreciation, as her skills and abilities were *seen* for what they were: an accidental quirk of Life unfolding in its ever-mysterious way.

EMBRACING LIFE

*'Your vision will become clear only when you look
into your heart. Who looks outside, dreams.
Who looks inside awakens.'*

Carl Jung

Embracing Life is simply playing 'The Game of Living' from the vantage point of Possibility.

From the realm of Possibility we *see* life clearly, we *see what is*, rather than through the distortion of our memories, conditioning and imaginings – our lifeless past.

How do we get to understand and *see* through the apparent duality caused by our own thinking? How do we actually *see* that there is nothing but Life, and that we simply lose ourselves in 'The Game of Living'?

The answer is simple.

Really see that I think. Understand that I'm thinking, and the momentary 'Game' (whatever it is) I'm making up via my capacity to think.

Realise that what I think is only my personal idea or belief and simply an aspect of my life unfolding at each moment in time.

And remember to remind yourself that it is not 'the truth'.

When we *see* that our capacity to think (whatever it is we are thinking) in any instant comes from the life-generating faculty of Thought (the formless Life energy generating all thinking), we are well on our way to freedom.

At that point we *see* that Thought enables us to discover and *see* afresh – to *see* beyond anything we have *seen* to date and to *see* what we have seen before in an entirely new way.

Equally, Thought enables us to take in the thinking of others from listening to them or from reading what they think. It also enables us to re-create and recollect thoughts from our memory, the archives of our many and varied personalised games of living.

The baseline is this: the degree to which we are aware that we think and are creating our moment-to-moment reality via the formless energy of Thought, is the same degree to which we are awake to Life and ‘The Game of Living’. That is: the degree (or level of awareness) to which we *see* that we are the author of *everything*, the *entire* ‘Game of Living’.

It’s our awareness that enables us to *see* beyond the bondage of our knowledge, beliefs, opinions and judgements.

It’s that level of awareness that allows us to *see* that we are the thinker, and to wake up to that simple but profound aspect of being human. In that state we experience the limitlessness of Possibility.

Seeing Possibility is what allows us to have a fresh experience of Life in every moment we’re present to that realm of fresh Thought.

What is, is what we *see* and experience when we are not lost in ‘The Game of Living’.

Our primary job is to stay mindful of Possibility, to reconnect with it when we stray, and again be at peace and in harmony with Life. And as a direct, simple and wonderful consequence, contribute to the common good.

Those who *see* Possibility are living signposts to freedom and the power that comes with understanding that our reality (whatever it might be) is internally created via Thought manifesting as our reality in any given moment.

Awakening to that is a transformative shift in consciousness. Understanding that we – via Thought, not via others or external circumstance – create our personal reality sets us free to fully embrace ‘The Game of Living’.

We and we alone determine whether we live lost in the illusion of the games we play, or *see* that our experience is the creation of our capacity to think – no more, no less – and, in doing so, gain our freedom.

We can live and play ‘The Game of Living’ consciously, in union with Life in all its manifestations.

We can be awake to the oneness of Life, in harmony and at peace with our fellow human beings, with nature, spirit, essence – the vital spark of everything imaginable.

As mentioned previously, most (perhaps all) people *see* Possibility to some degree at some point in their life. At the same time, race, religion, politics, philosophy, spirituality, sex, health and family are all areas (along with untold others) where we get stuck in entrenched views and become lost in impossibility.

It seems that we all need assistance at times to see ‘our truths’ for the delusions they are.

FINALLY

*'The master of the art of living makes little distinction between his work and his play, his labour and his leisure,
his mind and his body, his education and his recreation,
his love and his religion. He hardly knows which is which;
he simply pursues his vision of excellence in whatever he does, leaving others to decide whether he is working or playing. To him he is always doing both.'*

Buddha

Possibility is awareness lighting our way forward on whatever path we may find ourselves.

For those willing to surrender to the mysterious universal energy manifesting as Thought in our mind, Possibility awaits.

In that state I *see* a world in which you and I live from Possibility – a world in which we are kind and understanding of one another. Where wisdom, common sense, and a sense of fairness and decency govern all our decisions at work or at play. Where our actions regarding the planet and all that live on, below or above her are sustainable and taken with the common good foremost in mind.

So you and I have a decision to make.

The decision is whether we live lost in the illusion of 'The Game of Living', refusing to recognise that our experience is the creation of our capacity to think, nothing more and nothing less.

Or we can live and play 'The Game of Living' *consciously and in union with Life* (in all its manifestations) – in union and in peace with our fellow human beings, with nature, with 'the spirit, essence, soul or vital spark of everything imaginable'.

I hope you will join with me on that journey ... John

APPENDICES

The first appendix is an outline of ‘vertical inquiry’. This form of questioning is intended to take the client or workshop attendee beyond their conditioning, to experience a mental stillness and an opening of their access to Possibility. Our purpose is for the individual to see an aspect of their life afresh – or to have a fresh idea or insight into life.

The second is an outline of the Possibility Workshop – A Primer for a Creative Life. This not-for-profit program is offered to anyone who, having read this guide, is interested in participating in a three-day workshop to further explore the wonder of Possibility.

APPENDIX One

VERTICAL inquiry

'Then said a teacher, Speak to us of teaching.

And he said: No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge.

*The teacher who walks in the shadow of the temple,
among his followers, gives not of his wisdom but rather of
his faith and his lovingness.*

*If he is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the
threshold of your own mind.*

*The astronomer may speak to you of his understanding of space, but he cannot give you his
understanding.*

*The musician may sing to you of the rhythm, which is in all space, but he cannot give you the ear, which
arrests the rhythm, nor the voice that echoes it.*

*And he who is versed in the science of numbers can tell of the regions of weight and measure, but he
cannot conduct you thither.*

For the vision of one man lends not its wings to another man.

*And even as each one of you stands alone in God's knowledge, so must each one of you be alone in his
knowledge of God and in his understanding of the earth.'*

Kahlil Gibran

BACKGROUND

The first (and very brief) version of what follows came to me when asked: 'Please explain what you understand by the term "vertical inquiry"?'

Linda Pransky put that question to a group of us. We were interns at George and Linda Pransky's training and counselling facility in La Conner, Washington State, USA. The year was circa 1993.

Decades and many iterations later, this version is offered to potential participants in The Possibility Workshop as an introduction to the process we use to explore Possibility.

It is also presented here in this Appendix to those interested in understanding the ‘vertical inquiry’ method, which is a unique practice that can lead to *seeing* Possibility and experiencing personal transformation in a coaching session.

It sets out to explain how seeing into the realm of Possibility within each of us, via a specific questioning process, is particularly effective in leading to personal insights and a transformed understanding of how we experience reality and of the reality we experience.

What follows is in contrast to the more traditional ways of teaching, counselling and coaching, which is to pass on knowledge, including such popular methods as metaphor, illustration, storytelling, analogy, example, case study, outcome-oriented and experiential teaching methods, and all forms of input-focused instruction.

Each of these methods is, to a lesser or greater degree, an ‘outside-in approach’ to learning. In such an approach, information that is known is passed along to another where it might also become known – but this information is most often not learnt in a way that makes a difference in that person’s life and relationships.

Our approach to counselling/coaching and how we facilitate The Possibility Workshop is directed towards self-discovery, which is an ‘inside-out approach’.

In this approach, questions are asked with the intention of taking the person or persons away from the ‘known’ and into the ‘unknown’, and ultimately directing the client into the realm of Possibility and their innate place of true leaning.

This experience can transform forever the life of those being questioned.

As I have explained to many, ‘Keep asking me the right questions, and I’ll find the right answer’.

INSIDE-OUT COACHING

Please consider this question: does traditional teaching/facilitation get in the way of discovery?

Our coaching approach is predicated on what this guide suggests, and that is:

- life is an internally generated experience;
- our moment-to-moment reality, experienced through our senses, is brought to us via Thought and perceived through our present level of awareness;

- the wondrous faculty of Thought is the energy that powers each of us in having this miraculous experience called ‘our life’.

We also propose that our memory, that is, our lifelong accumulation, however valuable and indispensable much of it is to our daily living, can and does get in the way of our having a deeper, more direct, richer and more peaceful experience of life in each moment ... and most critically in *seeing* Possibility.

That personal discovery from within is the way to our transformation and renewal.

DELVING INTO THE UNKNOWN RATHER THAN ACCUMULATING THE KNOWN

Again, consider these questions:

- What are the ways of accessing that inner space of discovery?
- If the answers are to be found within, which of the following approaches might be more fruitful:
- Relying on the counsellor/coach to convey words of wisdom in the hope that they will have a lasting impact on the client or student?
- Or being asked questions by the counsellor/coach where they intend to evoke personal reflection and insight from a deeper intelligence/reality within, the realm we call Possibility?

If personal discovery is an inside-out process, as put forward in this guide, would it not make sense to coach in a way that is in harmony with that understanding?

In the light of our understanding of fresh Thought, would we want to acknowledge the nature of quiet reflection as leading to inner stillness and insight?

Similarly, is our inner environment best cultivated by continuing to reflect quietly, looking towards a calmed, reflective mind and seeing value in such an approach?

This process does require an approach that encourages inner reflection: being still and being willing to wait patiently in the unknown.

At the heart of The Possibility Workshop is the acknowledgment that the place of our transformation lies within each of us. The classroom, as it were, is our own mind, and the educator is the wellspring of original Thought and our experience of *seeing* Possibility.

QUESTIONING VIS-À-VIS TEACHING

Consider who or what best educates us in kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

Hence, what is our specific role as counsellors/coaches in facilitating the process of inner discovery via the deepening of another's understanding of Thought and thus their potential transformation from within the realm of Possibility?

Another way of posing this critical question is: does insight come from wise teaching and reading books on wisdom or, on the other hand, from what occurs within our mind while in the presence of the unknown and Possibility?

History is replete with examples showing that the pivotal element enabling the individual to *see* the nature of fresh Thought and Possibility lies within them. Might this suggest that the outside-in coaching or teaching process has significant limitations?

Furthermore, might a teaching and telling approach not be a conspicuous distraction in pointing the learner to their inner classroom and their inner educator?

Notwithstanding that, counsellors/coaches (as do books and tapes, etc.) have a role to play in leading people towards a deeper understanding. That is, if it is made clear that their useful function is that of being a signpost or guide to the client or student's inner classroom, and not the answer to what they are seeking.

The efficacy of the guide will be to the degree to which they or it points to our inner classroom and does not distract the student from their passage to that classroom.

Therefore, it is our coaching practice to employ a questioning process, primarily. Different labels have been used for this process, such as 'impartial inquiry', 'neutral inquiry', and 'vertical inquiry'.

We call our question style 'vertical inquiry', as it is neither neutral nor impartial in the truest sense of those words. Vertical inquiry has the intention of taking both teacher and student towards *seeing* ever deeper into the realm of Possibility.

The essence of the process employed in The Possibility Workshop lies in the asking of questions that take each person inward towards self-reflection and the unknown – that is, beyond our memory, beyond our beliefs, opinions, judgements and existing understanding of how our life works and why we experience our life the way we do.

The intention behind each question is to take us away from our story and to explore the unknown world within.

We readily acknowledge that in life it is necessary to possess all sorts of knowledge and have that knowledge on tap, but we put to you, as we do in the guide, that when such knowledge is on top, it blocks us from *seeing* Possibility. This is the cause of the problems most of us face but fail to *see* for too much of our life.

INSIDE-OUT VIS-À-VIS OUTSIDE-IN

In our daily lives we are brought to moments that bring into question how clearly we see, or *see* life and our relationships, and in these moments we are often sorely tested.

The choice appears to be whether we rely on what we have been conditioned to see and react to, and thus struggle with the outside world that appears to threaten or upset what we are certain is ‘the truth of the matter’.

Alternatively, are we to face these moments with the eyes of understanding, looking towards the unknown, waiting for the insight, the wisdom and the common sense to gently touch us as we stand quietly in silence, being open and willing to seeing our world afresh?

Experiencing these difficult or painful moments as an outside-in process inhibits reflection, as we are caught in thinking about the content of what is being said or done, whether it is true for us, or not, or whether we understand what is being said, or not.

Personal insights and accessing our potential for transformation are seldom, if ever, found in grappling with the content of our thinking – a reflection of how we *see* or see life.

It is when we are faced with questions that have us quietly examining our unaddressed assumptions about life, that we see the fallacies in our beliefs, opinions and judgements and see beyond them into the realm of Possibility and our transformation.

Vertical inquiry facilitates us in examining our long-held perceptions, raising the chances of our seeing Possibility, experiencing life anew from that deeper place of understanding – that place before the existence of our memory.

In much of traditional teaching theory, there is the idea that a student learns by listening, looking, reading, experiencing, or by other outside-in ways and then memorising that data. To consolidate the learning, the teacher synthesises the material or puts it together in new ways, which can be seen via the creative process that lies within the student.

We agree with there being an inner creative process, but the evidence suggests that the synthesising and the creative process do not occur as often as they might with the various outside-in teaching or coaching

methods. What happens, more often than not, is an accumulation of more information, called knowledge, which in and of itself does not lead to true understanding, transformation and renewal.

THE LIMITATIONS OF TRADITIONAL TEACHING, GROUP FACILITATION AND LEARNING VIS-À-VIS VERTICAL INQUIRY, REFLECTION, INSIGHT AND TRANSFORMATION

Ask yourself:

- Why do so many people find inspiration and peace in the presence of their counsellor/coach, but they struggle when they are not?
- Why do so many, while in a training program, experience life in a more positive way, but soon after leaving that environment they slip back into their old, less life-affirming habits?
- Why do so many, while on a personal development retreat or attending a self-help group, think, feel and act in a constructive, life-affirming way, and on returning to their regular life and work, they slip back into thinking, feeling and acting as they have for most of their life – in a much less constructive and affirming way?

We would suggest that the traditional teaching process, even from the counsellor's/coach's highest state of awareness, more often than not fails to facilitate inside-out learning, even though the student may become inspired or motivated in the presence of the counsellor/coach.

What is gained is a so-called intellectual understanding, not a transformative experience creating the rebirth or renewal of the student.

In other words, we suggest that the counsellor/coach is a signpost pointing in the wrong direction – outward – and in doing so, the counsellor/coach may not be fulfilling their important function. They may be distracting the student from being in the most fruitful learning environment – a quiet, reflective state of mind – looking inwardly to Possibility.

Ask yourself again: what is the intrinsic purpose or value of a signpost? How does it work?

Do our present worldviews and the input of the teaching or group process get in the way of our seeing beyond what we already see?

If we already see the value in what the counsellor/coach is saying, do we need the counselling or coaching anyway?

Is our true need to see beyond our thinking – thinking that is already visible to us?

To find out, the counsellor/coach needs to pose questions that will stretch us and question our present level of understanding (awareness/consciousness).

Most counsellors/coaches find it is easier to rely on traditional teaching methods because we are familiar with and comfortable with the ‘tried-and-tested’.

It is also easy to assume that if we, the coach or facilitator have had a life-transforming insight, sharing it will have an inspiring effect and stand a good chance of triggering insights in others.

How valid is that assumption?

What does the evidence suggest?

How successful are the plethora of seminars, workshops, training programs, courses, books, tapes, etc. in leading to lasting, life-transforming insights and understanding? And in having us examine our unexplored mind?

The process of vertical inquiry paves the way, via reflection, to insight.

Following an insight, we can subsequently benefit from some limited teaching, but confirmation and the fleshing-out of the particular insight is best gained from our own further insights and personal revelations. Moreover, this confirmation includes being reminded that all the answers we seek are found within.

Be mindful that it is the quality of our insights that leads to transformation, not the brilliance of the counsellor’s teaching or coaching, or the depth of their understanding.

It is at the same time a satisfying and heart-warming experience for the counsellor/coach to witness a client waking up in a new reality.

THE VERTICAL QUESTION AS A SIGNPOST (‘THE FINGER POINTING TO THE MOON’)

More questions for you to consider:

- How do vertical questions act as signposts?
- What are they pointing to?

Initially, asking questions that lead the client to look behind their assumptions

(knowledge, beliefs, opinions and judgments) may not come easily to most counsellors/coaches/facilitators, or in some cases to our clients. It takes both of us out of our 'comfort zones' and into the unknown.

However, once our client experiences the heartening results, this inside-out teaching method will, in our experience, become our preferred and their preferred modus operandi.

A vertical question is any question that directs attention away from us, the teacher, and towards the individual's inner wisdom, understanding and innate common sense. After all, the value of a signpost lies in the fact that it directs attention towards the destination.

A vertical question is a question that evokes reflection in the individual, rather than an automatic or conditioned response from memory.

As said, it is a question that has us examining our unexplored assumptions about life. It is a question that assists in the process of helping us to see that we are the thinker and therefore the creator of our experience, and it leads us towards the nature of fresh Thought and Possibility.

Vertical questions are designed to be catalysts for facilitating reflective thinking and therefore move us towards original Thought and fresh insight.

Vertical questions assist us in breaking through the barrier of our known thinking as well as our unconscious memories and into the yet-to-be-seen, the realm of original Thought.

Vertical questions assist us further in plumbing the depths of our inherent understanding. Vertical questions do that by being simple triggers that release us from our conditioning and into fresh Thought and exploring our innate nature.

It is from that realm of the unknown that original ideas emerge – novel ways of looking at old problems, new perspectives on long-held beliefs, a more life-enhancing reality.

Some might ask the question: is there a risk of putting people into an analytical state with questions, rather than a reflective state?

If the question draws on our memory, we will go into analysing, figuring out, and then back into circular thinking (unless the individual is already awake to what they are doing).

If, on the other hand, the question evokes reflection, it will take us towards the unknown and the realm of Possibility and seeing something new or experiencing a fresh take on something old.

It seems that when we are done with looking at the content of our memory, of endlessly raking over the coals (for some of us, our hell on Earth), it is the vertical questions that can unlock the gates to our psychological freedom and connect us with our innate health.

It occurs initially for some when we see that we are the thinker and, as such, are creating our experience, moment-to-moment, via Thought. Coupled with that, we become acutely aware of the quality of our in-the-moment thinking.

Vertical questions can guide us to an understanding of the inside-out nature of all human experience. In the counselling/coaching process, vertical questions have the effect of revealing clearly our thinking to us and, in the process, to the counsellor/coach.

Yes, this process edifies both. The counsellor/coach is guided as to what the next step (question) might be by the individual's response. And more importantly, the individual awakens through insight into their thinking and how Thought and their thinking determine their reality and experience of life.

The counsellor's/coach's role for us is only ever to be a simple signpost to the place of true insight and transformation – the realm of Possibility.

THE ROLE OF REFLECTION

Again, a couple of questions for you to consider as you read on:

- What are the qualities of reflection?
- What does it feel like, compared with 'normal' thinking?

Reflection occurs when we become the conscious witness to what we are thinking in the moment – to observe our thoughts and feelings with simple curiosity, awareness and maybe with wonder.

It is occurring when we notice what is going on in our mind without judgement, even when we are judging ourselves for judging ourselves.

Reflection is noticing *that* we are thinking and simultaneously noticing *what* we are thinking. It is being aware of what is passing through our mind. It is being aware that we are being aware.

Reflection is a state where we, as the thinker, start to transcend the limitations of our present worldview via *insight*.

Reflection leads us to become aware of the restrictions and limitations of our memory, of our conditioning, of our habitual, analytic, hidebound patterns, i.e. the content of our learned, personalised thinking.

Reflection is the inner gaze by the individual on the known while holding gently the intention of *seeing* the yet-to-be-*seen*, the unknown.

Reflection is having the intention of turning our back on what we believe we know and having trust in the unknown to reveal the new, the fresh and the *unseen*.

Reflection in the coaching process ensues automatically from the process of vertical inquiry.

Reflection acts as the doorway to *insight*, Possibility and transformation.

INSIGHT: A MOMENT OF POSSIBILITY

Insight is *seeing* in our mind's eye something brand-new, or something in a way we have not recognised before or been awake to until that moment.

However, whatever it is we *see*, it comes to us in a context of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense.

Insight is waking up from our ignorance.

It is that moment of enriching, an even exhilarating discovery that will likely transform our life – maybe forever. It is the unforgettable moment experienced by the scientist making a breakthrough; the composer hearing the new notes of a beautiful ballad; the superstar scoring the winning point in the dying seconds of the game, or the human being who, in a moment of kindness and understanding, forgives another human being after years of blaming and anger.

Insight is the gateway to transforming our relationship with the world.

THE LINKS JOINING VERTICAL INQUIRY, REFLECTION AND INSIGHT

Vertical inquiry, reflection and insight have a lot in common.

Vertical inquiry leads us to the moment where we set aside our world of memory, of seeing life through the illusions of our past. It takes us to the point of willingly *not* knowing and having the *intention* to wait in that unknown.

Vertical inquiry, without us realising, moves our gaze from our personal thinking towards what only can be described as impersonal (or arm's-length) thinking.

Vertical inquiry invites us to pause and become reflective on even our most mundane assumptions about how life is for us or how it is for others.

Reflection is, therefore, a natural progression from vertical inquiry.

Reflection enables the individual to *see* that their thinking alone has kept them trapped in a worldview that is restricting their happiness and growth.

The process of reflection enables the individual to gain freedom from the clutches of their habitual thinking. Having the individual reflect and *see* that they think and that their thinking can shift, encourages further reflection.

It is from the quiet, unbounded space of reflection that *insights* arise. The *insights* will inspire in the counsellor/coach fresh vertical inquiry that in turn will lead to deeper reflection and further *insights*. The continuing cycle of vertical inquiry/reflection/*insight* serves to deepen our understanding of how we have constructed our life and relationships, and how we might discover renewal via fresh Thought and Possibility.

THE CHOICE BETWEEN TRADITIONAL TEACHING AND VERTICAL INQUIRY

The likelihood of clients/groups coming up with *insights* and life-enhancing answers is significantly better via vertical inquiry – that is, using questions that call for reflection.

At best, traditional teaching leads to hit-and-miss results – the evidence points to a failure to achieve life-transforming experiences, in most cases.

Vertical inquiry, in my experience, is much more likely to result in personal *insights* that will provide a sound and continuing basis for lasting transformation.

The degree to which we consider that vertical inquiry-based coaching is successful is based on at least two criteria.

First, the degree to which the client transforms in a way that their life and relationships are, without exception, happier and more fulfilling.

Second, the degree to which the movement lasts over time and holds up in the face of life's vagaries.

In our experience, tapping the wisdom, common sense and innate health that already exist in every individual seems to be achieved most effectively and efficiently by directing the individual towards *seeing* the inside-out creation of life, via vertical inquiry.

Please join me in a Realm of Possibility Workshop ... John

APPENDIX TWO

THE NOT-FOR-PROFIT POSSIBILITY WORKSHOP: A PRIMER FOR A LIFE OF POSSIBILITY

‘Transforming yourself transforms your world.’

Sean Doyle

Possibility ... what a wonderful word it is!

Possibility or impossibility occupies our consciousness in each moment by what we *see* or see.

Possibility or impossibility is the raw material of our daily lives, creating our reality from either state.

We are creating our personal reality every moment and forming a continuous and ever-moving and evolving reality. You are doing it right now. Think about that ...

Yes, we create our personal world – our personal reality – in each moment. Not someone else, not outside events, not from how much money we have in the bank, not by our state of health; it is our thinking, independent of our circumstances.

Let’s change that sentence around a little. Let’s say that our reality is what we create, moment by moment from the gift of Thought.

Our world is what we are thinking and feeling right now; it is uniquely ours.

No matter how hard I try, I cannot create your world. I can try to influence it. I can try to help you think and feel differently about it – but in no way at all can I change or create your world. I cannot change the way you think and feel about life.

The way you think about life is the way life is for you in each unfolding moment. It is your potential and your momentary state of Possibility or impossibility.

When we wake up to the simple but profound reality that ‘we think into existence our reality’, we experience a shift in consciousness that has us more aware and more alive than ever before.

There’s nothing mystical here. It’s simply a shift in our awareness – us operating with greater clarity, greater *insight*, and at that new level, perhaps for the first time. It is us *seeing what is!*

The deliciousness of creating freshness is experienced in moments when we *see* our partners, our children and grandchildren, our friends, our colleagues, everyone as if for the first time.

The illusion of our memories, expectations, history and bias (one way or the other) is what hides them from us and blocks us from *seeing* who they really are, in a new, fresh moment.

When we hold ourselves and others responsible for life being the way it is – when we look to upbringing, environment, past mistakes or experiences – we are lost in our story. And we are blinded to our deeper reality of Possibility.

Re-creating our experience in each moment from our lifelong accumulation of ideas as to why life is the way it is, and others are the way they are, is seeing life from a state of impossibility. It is our unrecognised rationale for the way life is.

We are busy using our past experiences to make sense of our life and put it in the order we believe it should be in, and when we do that we simply continue to live out our story – our beliefs, opinions and judgements – nothing more, nothing less. Nothing changes. We are simply projecting our past forward into our future.

Reasons and rationales, however compelling, are figments of our imagination. They are the story we have methodically or haphazardly created to try to make sense of our momentary experience, which we call our life.

Once we *see* Possibility, we *see* people like you and me who have learned habits, habits that could be described as unrecognised disabilities. I say disabilities because we don't *see* that they are self-created boundaries to fresh discovery, creativity, direct action and a deeper understanding of our true self ... our loving nature.

Neither you nor I need accept that we must remain as we believe our conditioning, gender, or culture has shaped us.

On this journey of discovery we must first acquire an understanding: that we already possess a deeper intelligence beyond the limitations of our memory, beyond everything about which we deceive ourselves, beyond believing that life is what we believed it to be.

Do we want to remain a prisoner of a finite past? Or would we rather *see* and experience the wonderful world of infinite Possibility?

Possibility is just a thought away.

A (NOT-FOR-PROFIT) THREE-DAY WORKSHOP

While I was in Peru, Possibility and its polar opposite, impossibility, came starkly into focus.

The idea for the Possibility Workshop came to me in Peru, towards the end of that 32-day marathon in the jungle. This appendix was written almost word for word at that time, as was the curriculum outline for the three days.

COST

The Workshop is offered at cost (venue, food, beverages and sundry expenses) of staging the event, and is shared equally among the participants. As I can afford to, my time, travel and accommodation costs are given free.

THE PROJECT'S AIM

The Workshop's aim is to assist all participants (including me) to *see* Possibility and thus create a fresh, sustainable future for themselves and their relationships.

Whereas this written guide has lots of abstraction in it, the Workshop is relentlessly practical and experiential. You'll be exploring Possibility in the company of a group of fellow explorers. It is made available for those looking for the doorway through which to step.

THE SPECIFIC AIM: TRANSFORMATION

The specific aim for the three days is personal transformation. The aim is for you to leave with a deeper experience of Possibility, or perhaps a conscious experience of Possibility for the first time.

At the very least, and as a product of the process, you will come away:

- as a deeper listener to yourself, to others and to nature, listening to life with greater clarity and heeding what you hear in a heightened state of awareness;
- with more understanding of yourself and therefore of others and, as a consequence, a stronger feeling of kindness and understanding and a heightened level of wisdom and common sense;
- better able to make a loving difference in your relationships by being present and available;

- better able, by your presence, to bring others together in a way that nurtures their spirit and helps open their hearts and minds to Possibility;
- as a more loving, understanding wife, husband, parent, grandparent, friend, neighbour, colleague;
- as a wiser woman walking down the street or a more understanding man standing in line at the checkout;
- being the leader the world desperately needs at this time in history.

WHO ARE YOU?

We welcome the participation of individuals who are interested in *seeing* Possibility, not only for themselves but for society and humanity as a whole.

It may be that you want to *see* a way to achieving:

- a fairer, kinder and more just workplace;
- a transformation from a society dominated by power and control leadership to one that values a true blend of freedom of expression and human decency;
- increasing numbers of entrepreneurs creating employment and thus less dependence on taxpayer-funded welfare subsidies;
- a naturally occurring and sustainable redistribution of wealth from a growing minority to an increasing majority;
- workplaces that are fun, fulfilling and financially rewarding for employers and employees alike.

It's for those who personally want to move from a consumption-driven, credit-based, increasingly debt-dependent, seemingly never-satisfied materialistic lifestyle to one featuring greater simplicity, sustainability and inclusion.

- It might be for those who want to step off the treadmill without being killed financially.

- It might be for those who want to *see*:
 - their children and grandchildren living in a world at peace with itself;
 - world religions congruent with what their founder *saw*, a world of kindness, understanding, wisdom and common sense, not divisiveness and separation;
 - a quickening towards environmental sustainability;
 - politicians in service to their constituents rather than themselves and narrow interests;
 - sustainable agricultural practices, adequate food supplies globally, and food and water that are poison-free;
 - schools as places of discovery, liberty and Possibility rather than houses of robotic learning, restraint and narrow, ideology-based thinking;
 - universities as places that encourage free thinkers, free thinking and Possibility;
 - universities independent of global corporations pushing their particular financial interests;
 - universities independent of ideological and political correctness from the left, right or centre;
 - businesses that want to be profitable – not at the expense of the community or the environment, but as vital contributors to the health, wealth and well-being of all.
- It might be for people with a social conscience who want to be powerful, peaceful vanguards and who want to be able to clarify their thinking and thus their purpose and take action, who want to transform from being prisoners of problematic thinking to becoming architects of sustainable solutions.

- It might be for farmers, market gardeners, doctors, lawyers, teachers, plumbers, carpenters, mechanics, and people from every walk of life who want to create a wholesome, decent community.
- It's certainly for those who want and are willing to take responsibility and be accountable for every nook and cranny of their life.
- It's certainly for those who want to take the power back from the illusory 'them' and who want to live in a society that understands that we (you and I) are 100-percent responsible for creating crime, unemployment and homelessness. That we are responsible for the marginalised and disadvantaged, the degradation and pollution of the environment, the taxpayer subsidies for unsustainable commercial practices and growing welfare dependency, the full jails and overflowing surgeries and hospitals.
- It's certainly for those who see that they are 100-percent responsible for what is happening right now and *see* Possibility in creating a new future, a just, sustainable, kind, welcoming, hospitable, inclusive, more fun-filled society.
- It's certainly for those that are willing to turn their thinking upside down and inside-out and recognise that, for better or worse, we are the creators of what we see and the reality we experience and that, for better or worse, we either see from impossibility or *see* from Possibility.
- It's for those who understand that we don't have to fix 'them' but simply wake up to what we have created, and re-create our own transformed future.
- It's for anyone willing to break out of their trance and *see* that 'we' are 'them'. And that we can transform our life, families, workplaces, neighbourhoods, country, and the world.
- It's for people who want to reclaim their streets, neighbourhoods, suburbs and cities.
- It's for people who already understand that the world can be a happier, healthier and more sustainable place for this and future generations.
- It's for people who want to *see* how to be part of the transformation, by letting go of their past to create a future of Possibility.

The Workshop welcomes and encourages the participation of private-sector organisations, government and NGOs.

Your objectives may be to seek:

- a reduction in alcohol and drug use;
- a reduction in domestic violence;
- an increase in homeless people finding accommodation;
- an increase in disadvantaged youth into education and employment;
- an increase in disadvantaged men and women into community;
- more people with disabilities welcomed into advantaged society;
- more Aboriginal people healthy and happy;
- more offenders rehabilitated rather than punished.

OUR APPROACH

Come prepared to engage. Come prepared to discover for yourself what Possibility looks and feels like. There will be limited teaching, lecturing, handouts (other than this book – a copy provided free to participants upon enrolment) or discussion.

All questions (except for questions seeking clarification) will more than likely be responded to with a question. You have all the answers to solve that which puzzles you. Our job will be to simply keep pointing you in the direction of your innate connection to Possibility.

These three days will be no armchair ride. We will facilitate the process assuming that you are in self-discovery mode and not looking for more second-hand information. You already have enough of that and it is part of the paralysis-by-analysis information overload that we live in; it's more of the umpteen unread or un-actioned surveys, reports, books and expert analyses.

This Workshop is a time to reclaim your power as an equal among equals, exploring your mind and the unlimited power of Possibility.

NO SCRIPTS, NO SCORING, NO PRESUMPTIONS

We have absolutely no idea how these three days will work out, or if a single attendee will *see* authentic Possibility within their mind. We mean that. We offer no guarantees. We can assure you that you will be treated as a respected human being, equal in every respect. You will be truly an equal among equals.

WHAT WE DO PROMISE

You will be treated as an important guest and our hospitality will include wholesome foods, deliciously prepared. You will not go hungry!

You will not be asked to do anything other than to be part of the larger group and to be with others in small groups. You will not be asked to give more than a five-second introduction of yourself – e.g. ‘I’m John Wood from Darlington’ – or you can pass on introducing yourself. You will not be asked why you are here or what you want to gain from attending. Each person will be given a name badge with their first name shown.

Our priority is the safety and inclusion of each individual. We will be vigilant throughout the three days to ensure that each person feels safe to explore their inner world at all times.

Exploration and self-discovery, rather than ‘learning’, are the key objectives during the Workshop (see Appendix One).

Listed below are some of the obstructions to *seeing* Possibility, the habits which most of us innocently employ to live our daily lives.

They are blocks to *seeing* Possibility; they keep us stuck in our conditioning, in impossibility. For the duration of the workshop, we will ask that you let go of:

- giving advice to anyone on anything, even if asked;
- coaching anyone, even if asked;
- telling parts or all of your story or anyone else’s story, even if asked;
- answering for anyone else, even if asked;
- giving the small or large group your opinions, beliefs and judgements, even if asked;

- correcting anything you think, hear or see is out of place, including any breaches of these requests, even if asked;
- taking notes, as doing so is a block to *seeing* Possibility. Remember, this is about *seeing* Possibility, not learning another method.

The exceptions to the above being the safety and wellbeing of each individual.

Each day will be invested in reflecting on a series of questions created to assist you to *see* into the way you think and to *see* into and beyond your answers. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions we will pose. The answers will be a reflection of each person's separate reality and, we trust, a stepping stone to your *seeing* Possibility.

Appendix One details the questioning process we utilise in this Workshop.

The group will be limited to 30 participants. Fifteen will be required for the process to work and for the group to go ahead.

WHY WE TAKE THE APPROACH WE DO

The distinction between being taught and the self-discovery process we employ is this: 'being taught' is gaining knowledge from another source and is by definition second-hand information. As well-informed and important as that information might be, it is another person's discovery. Our aim is for you to make your own discoveries.

Knowledge can be gathered about and around Possibility, but the experience of *seeing* Possibility is unlikely to be had from second-hand information.

As I have mentioned in the guide, self-discovery *seen* via original Thought is yours. You own it! You can rightfully claim 100-percent ownership of whatever you find within the clear space of your own mind. It comes from your innate capacity for experiencing original Thought and is yours for life. It is an unshakeable, deep-seated understanding, and – it's still not 'the truth'. Rather, it's the result of you or me *seeing* Possibility at that point in time. There is always and will always be more to *see*. Please visit our website for information on the next Possibility Workshop.

I would love to meet you there ... John

therealmofpossibility.org.au

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