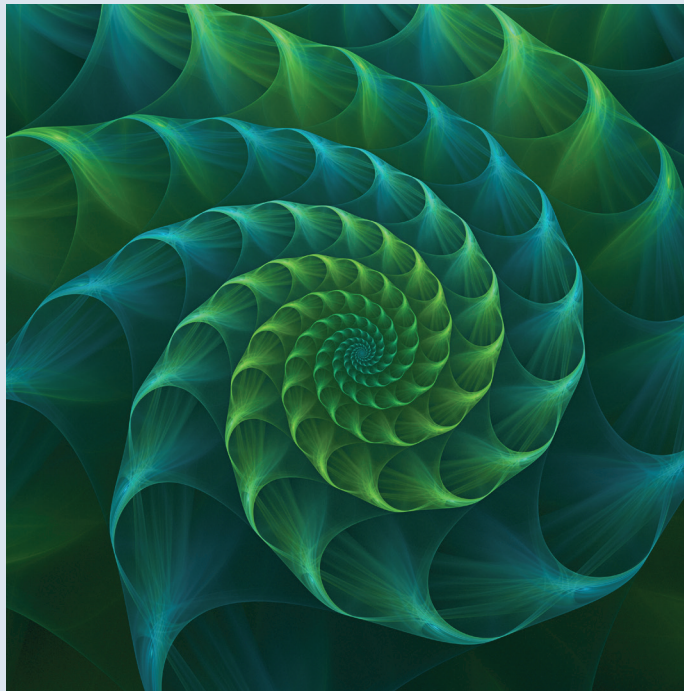


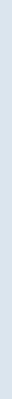


AN INTRO TO

Harmonized Growth



*An introductory guide to
stepping forward into a life full
of ease.*



by ISG Founder
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A Publication of



— INSTITUTE FOR —
Systemic Growth

Hello!



No one can empower you. You can't empower others. Empowerment is a fundamental shift from the inside.

I spent decades playing by the rules – getting the education, being a good corporate soldier, following all the parenting practices, and being the 'good wife.' Thinking I should be able to do it all. Only to have the rug pulled out from under me. Yet I continued to take responsibility for problems that weren't mine. Continued to neglect my health for the supposed betterment of others. Exhausted, fed up, and reliant on unhealthy coping strategies, I started to take charge of my life. Unfortunately, I wasn't aware that all the moves were out of my protectors. The unintended consequences on myself, my relationships, and my family were inevitable. Predictable and painful.

Once I began delayering my protectors, healing wounds, and understanding myself, I started finding clarity of direction. Courage to act authentically, to take action on my passion for building healthy families and organizations as the foundation for meaningful change. I stopped waiting for permission. The latest step involved loosening the protector, originating in infancy, that dismissed myself – my feelings, my knowledge, my voice. This ebook and [Institute for Systemic Growth](#) are realities of my harmonized growth. I'm on the journey with you! I am human, too.

-Shelly Melroe

ISG Founder

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Stuck on Autopilot



Really, *how are you?*

It can be hard to know. Reliance on autopilot responses, like those above, stream without awareness and become a habit in day-to-day life. We become disconnected and detached from ourselves and each other - unintended consequences of managing a 'stressful' life. Adopting a belief that keeping the mind 'on track' is all that matters. The focus: how we're supposed to be, what we're supposed to do, that we should be doing it all. Holding ourselves in a vicious cycle of internal criticism for not meeting expectations. Not *<fill in the blank>* enough. Yuck.

Industrialization and science have swung the pendulum too far.

The age of 'science' began modeling cause-and-effect relationships. But humans are dynamic. Lurking factors in the background go unacknowledged, not to mention the unnoticed implications beyond the research window. Findings get overgeneralized to the point where we create new problems. People are looking for quick fixes because they've been misled by marketers, medical professionals, and pharmaceutical and technology companies to believe they exist. Sustainable outcomes take sustainable growth.

Closer to home, we've been parented to think we 'should know' things despite thousands of new findings being discovered each day. This is not intended as blame. The unintended consequences of narrow, snapshot, anecdotal information being applied generically and out of context, to the detriment of many.

In or out of your awareness, the struggles are real...

- Get defensive at the slightest mention of something counter to your thinking.
- To respond with irritation when a child does something age and developmentally-appropriate.
- Don't know what to think and begin questioning everything
- Wonder why you bother
- Tired of going through the motions yet too tired to do anything else
- Dumping your angst on others, oblivious to how you affect them
- Claim to not care yet express discontent regularly
- Physical distress – pain, tightness, soreness, chronic fatigue, insomnia
- You're thinking about change constantly, yet nothing changes
- Being more and more dependent on escaping, hiding, numbing
- Trying to feel through overworking, sex, food, excess working out, drinking, or drugs
- It never feels ok to be you, as you are.

It isn't that you haven't tried to make things better.

You're thinking about it all the time. You're constantly trying the latest tips for your weight, your productivity, being a good leader, parenting your children right, and reducing your risks of Alzheimer's and heart attack. The information is endless and often contradicts itself. And yet, there's the nagging thought that *you should just know or you should be able to get it right.*

The First Step

You've been missing a critical first step – be the expert of you!



I'm not a science basher. I actually love science! I've guided, analyzed, and applied many research studies for decision-making in consumer products, manufacturing, environmental programs, health, and nutrition - across industries and situations. When using the evidence, the most important thing is understanding the context. When it comes to your health and wellbeing, the context

Contrary to whatever sound bytes roll through your mind, you are enough!

that matters is **you** - your life situation, your organs and nervous system, your life lived, your values and passion. You are the expert in you. You get to discern all the information for what is most applicable to you.

You are all that you can be, given the life you've lived to this point. Given your current context, all those expectations you're chasing may not even apply. Given the context within which you have lived – the dynamics around you, the feedback loops (spoken and unspoken) that shaped you – you have dynamics within you that led you to your current functioning. However you are, it's an artifact of life lived, and you are enough. Many know this to be true, yet don't believe it or feel it.

Being Human

*Humans first develop heart, then brain.
We do not outgrow it.*



Despite the long gestation period, humans are underdeveloped at birth. Unable to survive on their own. Infants depend on gentle, attuned interactions – feedback loops of coregulation and nurturing - with adults caring for us to develop neurophysiologically. Getting the needs met by the care of others develops an inner sense of security in the world. Our autonomic nervous system develops regulation patterns in the context within which we live. This critical development in the first few months and years of life provide the foundation for emotional, cognitive, and moral development. Neurophysiological development and functioning is the core of our wellbeing and springboard to lifelong health and success.

Throughout life, the accuracy and breadth of our cognitions of all forms depend on our emotional state and felt sense of the body. Mental and physical health are interconnected with emotional and regulating patterns in the nervous system. ‘Stress’ is a neurophysiological ailment, unresolvable through behaviors alone. Many models of care fail to recognize the whole person. Parenting through adult interpretations and beliefs fails to develop security in children. Workplaces that expect compartmentalization fail to support the wellbeing of the people they depend on. Let’s reorient to the paradigm of whole-person, integrated health and development.

THE STATISTICS ARE RIDICULOUS

In 2020, an estimated 52.9 million adults aged 18 or older in the United States with acute mental illness. This number represented 21.0% of U.S. adults. (NIHM)

An estimated 49.5% of adolescents had any mental disorder (NIHM)

Obesity, diabetes, and chronic pain are on the rise. (CDC)

The language of the experts is part of the conundrum.

It sends the message that people are broken. Grandiosity in positions of power can keep folks from seeing their role in the situation. There's compassion here, not criticism; behaviors of one-upping are a common inner protector. They can sit out of awareness, just like people-pleasing, avoiding, and behaviors of taking a one-down position. People can be a barrier to systemic growth and not even realize it.

What we've been characterizing as pathology is not. It's developmental. We should expect to have at least some of these symptoms at some point in our life. Yet they are not a life sentence. Just like all struggles in life, they can be viewed as stimulus for growth.



You are the expert of you.

You are more than your behaviors and symptoms. Thanks to researchers and human scientists who took a path of observation and discovery, we can appreciate how behavior-focused methods led us astray. Behaviors are often a solution to a problem in the regulation and survival systems.

We now understand differently, thanks to a few bold pioneers that challenged the status quo

in their respective fields (such as Dr. Gabor Mate, Dr. Stephen Porges, Dr. Richard Schwartz, Dr. Peter Levine, and Dr. Daniel Siegel). These challenges are not disorders; they are developmental. They are developed through our relational interactions. And we can **change the trajectory**. We can embrace that the nervous system is the root of trauma effects causing distress and dysfunction. It can be restored, shifting from protection to growth.

Problem behaviors, from child outbursts to addictive behaviors, from inattentiveness to depression, are artifacts of a life lived. They serve some purpose interconnected with emotional/social survival

mechanisms. Particularly after the experience of a global pandemic, we need to, and can, heal from the inside out without complicated processes that further threaten the inner system.

So regardless of what stressors and struggles brought you here, the root is similar: our inner systems are miscuing and alerting threat responses unnecessarily. We need to embrace understanding the dynamics of how humans actually work.

Reconnect to the foundations, the simplicity of being a human.

When experts draw conclusions by looking at their tiny piece of the puzzle, they leave you without the whole picture. You are a system of subsystems. You are physical, emotional, mental, social, relational, neurobiological, and energetic. See yourself as the interconnected system that you are. It may be complex but not complicated if we open our perspective to the whole picture.

Understand yourself as a human being, a social mammal. A social mammal with thinking that can be a help or hindrance to wellbeing. Get this - our thinking is about 15-20% of our being. And to those familiar with the 80/20 rule, it is *not* the 20% that matters most in our well-being. In fact, it is often an artifact, a consequence, of the 80% of the internal communication going on in the body and from the body to the mind.

As a social mammal, the 20% that matters most is the detection and communication in our survival system – are we safe or under threat? Is it dangerous or life-threatening? It works out of our awareness unless we do the work to bring it into our awareness. Increasing our attention to it is not necessary. It will keep doing what it does without conscious effort. We can live our whole lives without doing so - with unintended consequences on our own health and well-being, the health and wellbeing of our children and partners, and well-being and success in our professions and workplace. It impacts our longevity, our relationships, our living.

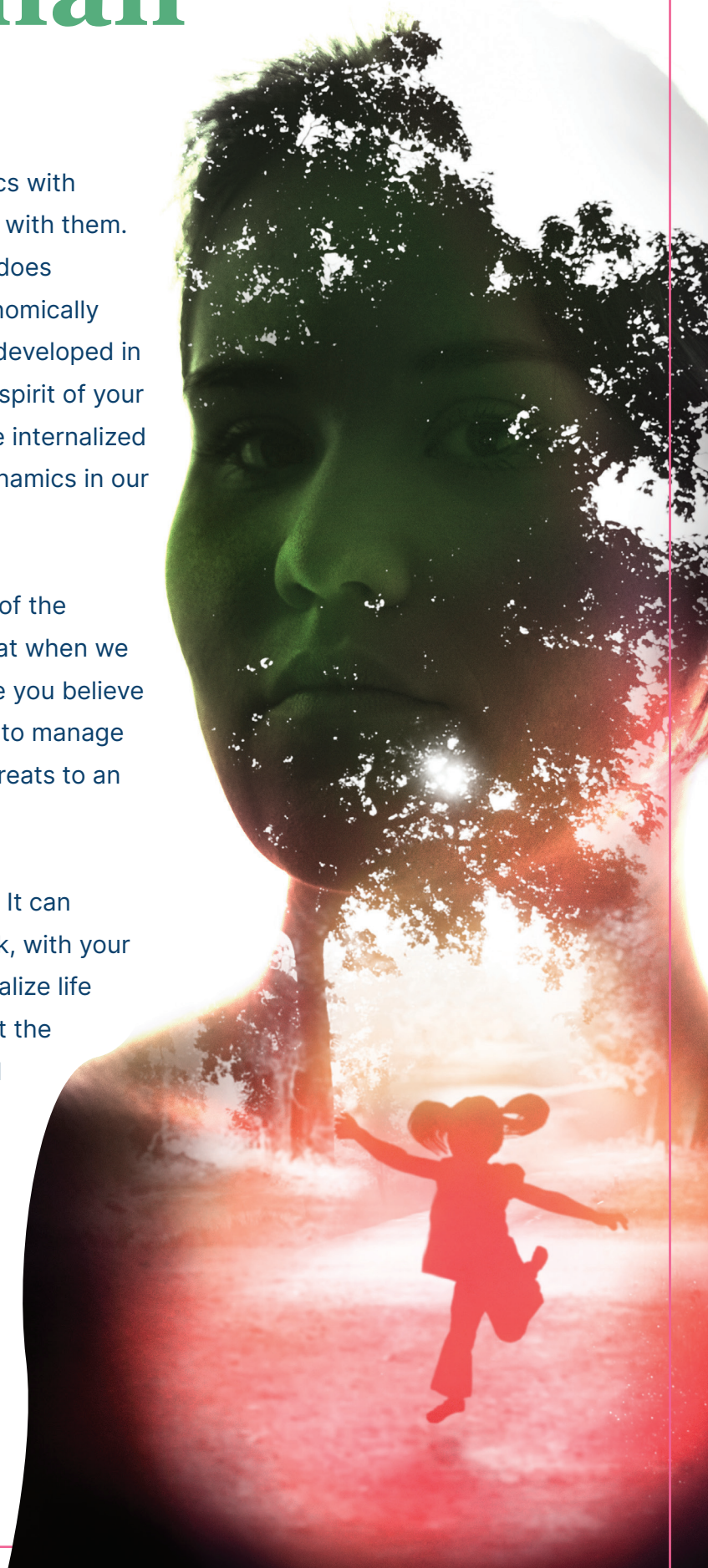


Being Human Together

To fully understand yourself, explore your dynamics with others. To understand others, see your dynamics with them. Remember the social mammal part? Your system does not function independently from others. It is autonomically operating based on our regulating patterns neurodeveloped in layers through childhood. The adaptations, in the spirit of your survival, are internalized and come with you. Once internalized and automated, they lead us to recreate those dynamics in our outer world without even realizing it.

We can find ourselves in adulthood operating out of the nonconscious survival system that can cue a threat when we are actually safe. Behavior psychology would have you believe it is 'stress' and you need to 'manage' it. Attempts to manage it create new problems because we bring more threats to an already threatened system.

This is a system that is with you wherever you go. It can miscue during time alone, with your family, at work, with your neighbor, anywhere... Our efforts to compartmentalize life may have fragmented our thinking and feeling, but the survival system has one focus: survival as a social mammal. Couples have threat responses to each other, nonconsciously going into protection when they desire connection. Parents can have a threat response to natural child behaviors. An adult cannot develop a child beyond their own neurodevelopment. Hence, a child cannot be more regulated than the adults they depend on. Accepting this can be life giving to the whole family. By seeing yourself as part of the problem, you can directly address your own contribution, opening the system to effectively grow forward.



Continuing to Expand Outward

A fundamental of human systems is the mirroring of the dynamics – dynamics around a person early in life manifests within; what is experienced in the inner dynamics is then projected outward. Out of our awareness because it's too important to human survival. Enter industrialization - efficiency with machines and science. When efficiency efforts on machine processes 'worked' to increase productivity and profit, it was then applied to human systems. We began 'improving' business processes as if they were machine processes. I contributed to this disaster in many projects, denying my own feelings of powerlessness and firsthand observations of the unintended consequences.

A business process is conducted by humans, in a human system we call an organization. Efficiency of anything that is counter human security and survival paradigms will eventually create conflict and distress, individually and organizationally. When outcomes depend on multiple organizations, double or triple the pain!

In addition, people confuse the hierarchy, designed to set responsibility and accountability for the business, with relationships and human-ness. Position gets confused with relational power, usually out of awareness because it's in the autonomies. We call it organizational 'culture' yet fail to address it for what it is, leaving it to be words on a wall. Efficient...check the box.



Humans are constantly interregulating, creating the dynamics around us.

We see the manifestation of these dynamics

in many organizational systems today:



The workplace has disintegrated as a place of stability. Companies want passion and commitment yet keep the freedom to change employment at any time. Out of awareness, leaders accept cultures of toxicity as long as it's not bad enough for legal action.



Medical healthcare entanglement between service organizations, insurance companies, pharmaceutical companies, regulating bodies, academic institutions while staff are in shortage, overburdened, burnout out. Patients can get pushed around the system without their needs being addressed, carrying more burden they are 'unfixable.'



Mental healthcare, believing it needed to follow a medical model to be credible, has extended the minimization of the whole person. Entanglement of care, insurance, and institutions persists yet providers are overburdened and lacking systemic leverage. Treatment modalities that would benefit some clients the most are inaccessible.



Education systems continue to be funded and evaluated on performance, failing to see the increase in student 'behavior problems' and 'refusal' and staff burnout and stress are interconnected with the larger systems.



Early childhood has focused on early 'education', taking away from developing security and belonging as the foundation for future health and success.

With feedback loops that reinforce the tension and conflict within us

In our highly mobile world and the internet bringing the corners of the world to us, we routinely interact with others raised in different paradigms, with different life experiences. They disagree with our perspectives and challenge what we know (or think we know); they feel differently about goals and decisions. If this disturbs our inner dynamics of survival, conflict and tension between people and within people is inevitable. The people in organizational systems become overwhelmed, further sparking defensive patterns that hold them stuck in the status quo, rather than embracing the growing pains of systemic growth.

What is experienced around us is a mirror of what is experienced within. This dynamic simultaneously is reduced down to the family - These same patterns of conflict and dysfunction are felt in family systems of all shapes and sizes. Divorce rates continue to be high and without resolving the roots of the issues, repeat in second and third marriages with significant, albeit unintended, consequences on children. Children are missing key developmental steps towards felt sense of security and belonging, necessary for the subsequent emotional, social, and cognitive development. Family health and educational success are linked! The challenges were exacerbated by a global pandemic and increasing global unrest. Interestingly, these were predicted by futurists that, decades ago, were modeling the human dynamics while many leaders pushed it away as it would have challenged profits and paradigms of the status quo.

It's a crisis of humanity. Our interconnectedness helps or hinders. The solution is within each of us.

Growth is life-giving

Break the patterns and grow forward.

These challenges are natural, to be expected in human systems, and can be used as stimulus for growth.

Harmonized growth is a path to renewal that works with human biology, not threaten it. It can be broken down into education, experience, and application steps, creating an infection model of harmonized growth.

To evolve and grow takes momentum to overcome the status quo. Unfortunately, those that have the most influence on change have the most at stake when a system evolves. A leader who needs to feel over others will feel less secure as confident employees share dissenting perspectives. A parent with wounds from an invisible childhood will berate a child for needing attention, although it is an essential building block of security and self-identity.

When the patterns continue, intentionally or unintentionally, they create feedback loops that hold the system stuck even though the unintended consequences become blindingly apparent. The risks and fears sit in the nonconscious, conveniently out of awareness yet driving thinking, communicating, and actions that reinforce to others to stay stuck

in the status quo. There is another way; an approach consistent with human biological growth and development.

By approaching it consistent with the roots of our biology, the complexity of change becomes simple. This root understanding allows an infectious model of harmonized change that can begin at any layer of the system. The answer lies **within** humans, underneath their behaviors to the functioning of the autonomic, circular systems connected to our survival. This same fundamental functioning holds patients stuck in test after test by doctor's orders, families stuck in dysfunction, and professionals overwhelmed and burning out. Solving what ails our families, schools, organizations, and society starts on the inside.



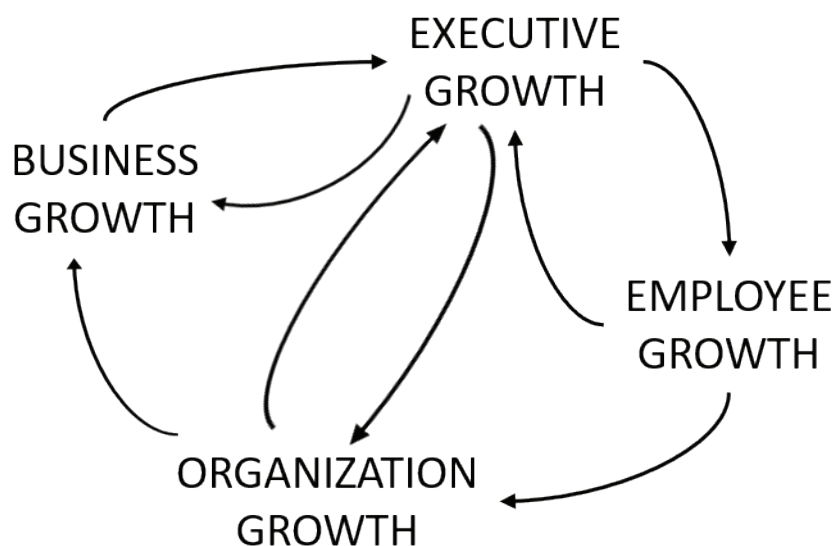
Harmonized growth is the path forward.

In my therapy practice, I've been integrating concepts and techniques from pioneers in the field, and my clients are regularly feeling better and getting on with living. The conventional model would be to hire more therapists and replicate the work. Yet this is a fundamental flaw in the system.

First, it is not necessary. People experiencing stressors, problem behaviors, and distressing symptoms are not necessarily mentally ill, broken, or disordered.

They are experiencing unintended consequences of maladaptations in their regulating systems. They have neuroplasticity to restore and develop forward. Problem behaviors and symptoms are not a life sentence. They are a solution to a deeper dysregulation. By addressing the dysregulation and understanding the inner feedback loops, we can reduce the symptoms and reliance on 'problem behaviors' organically.

We can engage the natural process of human development that includes a bidirectional experience between people. Working from within individuals and then outward, **harmonized growth** allows couples, parents and children, and adult family members to restore and heal – sometimes in parallel and sometimes sequentially. It's the direction that matters, working with whoever in the system is ready to embrace and cultivate growth. The same applies to the workplace when executives are prepared to be relationally equal with others and hold appropriate decision-making and accountability. Unfortunately, most organizations work off relational hierarchy, keeping growth at bay.





Harmonized growth works with your natural processes.

The harmonized systemic growth model builds on the principles that our mental, emotional, and relational development happens through interpersonal neurobiology. We develop social, relational, and cognitive capacities like problem-solving and creativity through our interactions with others. Similarly, we initially depend on our interactions with others to understand who we are. At later stages of development, we can step back from the messages from others and explore our inner selves more intentionally. However, we're faced with the challenge of sorting through layers of socialized learning to get to the true self, to make the shift from being what others see in us (which is often a projection of themselves) to be who we truly are.

Harmonized growth provides a bodymind approach to self-understanding and your innate capacity to *continually* challenge paradigms and act from intention rather than protection. By understanding your inner dynamics, you can feel safe in the face of differences and challenges, so learning and growth can happen, often in harmony.

Harmonized growth works with the natural human growth and development process within all of us, consistent with our human biology. Pavlov, Skinner, and other behavior scientists accurately shared their experiences. However, they overlooked context and failed to see themselves as active factors in the observations. Over-generalizations led to unintended consequences on the people in the systems still dependent on that model today.

Self Leadership

Harmonized growth starts where you are.

See yourself, the interconnections that you are. See the mirror reflecting your inner and outer experiences.

A human being is an open system, constantly surveilling, communicating, and reacting based on current regulation and survival patterns – out of your awareness. What family systems pioneers first mapped, quantum physics as measuring and affirming. The era of science has allowed us to study and understand mechanical, chemical, electrical, and electromagnetic systems around us. Yet we've failed to embrace that human beings are all of that, too!

First, we look inward.

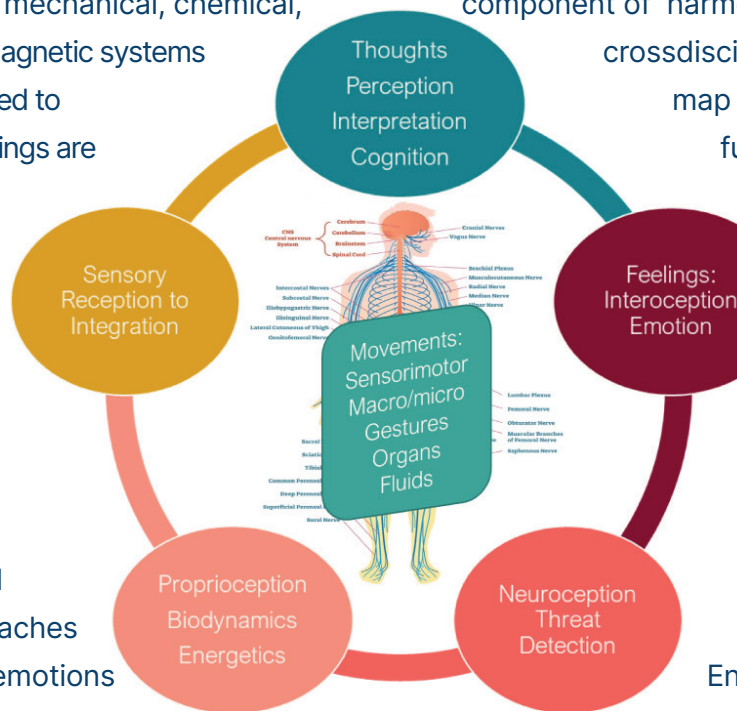
Mindfulness can develop awareness of thoughts, yet rigidity or flexibility in thought depends on the state of the body. Emotional intelligence training teaches the understanding of emotions

yet misses the fundamental of recognizing how your emotions are always influencing your decisions – if you are aware of them or not. Beliefs, which are thoughts with an emotional survival hook, interfere with creativity and openness, hindering problem solving.

Emotional health is interconnected with physical health, clarity of thinking, and our ability to navigate uncertainties and unknowns. In the Self Leadership component of harmonized growth, we integrate

crossdisciplinary evidence to build a map for understanding your inner functioning – your autopilots and interconnections –

with curiosity to see how incongruence in body, mind, emotion, and felt sense are contributing to inner tension, constriction, and dis-ease. Remember, this is what we nonconsciously then create in the context around us. Enough of that nonsense!



Change and growth are hard. Your inner protectors for survival need to be understood before they will relax. Beliefs are thoughts with emotional tethers. Expectations are behaviors with emotional baggage. Have behaviors that you want to stop but just can't? Map the inner dynamics and understand the inner feedback loops that give the behavior purpose from an outdated context. Map the system around you, and identify the feedback loops of others that reinforce the behavior. Even if they do not like it, they are likely nonconsciously supporting it! No worries, you are doing the same thing to them, too. It's in our biology.

Harmonized growth sets you up to be a gentle presence, inviting growth in others.

You are interconnected, and inter-regulating with so many others. Imagine the possibility of influencing your children's health, identity, and resilience for their best life. Rather than teaching them what to think, expand their capacity to think flexibly for their well-being and success in a future we can't imagine. Partnered relationships can support the growth of each other at each person's pace and sequence. Workplaces can be a source of stability, growth, and systemic change from the middle. Regardless of your roles in work and life, your Self Leadership and Dynamics Leadership can evolve a system for trust and respect, nourishing the people it serves rather than beating them down – by first leading change in your inner system. Mapping and understanding how your internal system is functioning – nourishing it for growth so you can bring that refreshed and renewed dynamic to your world. Change on the outside is impossible without first changing on the inside.



Benefits of harmonized growth for individuals:

- Expand how you think – creative, clear, critical, flexible
- Identify unhealthy roots of expectations and be more expectant of possibilities
- Expand emotional flow for healthier physiology and reduced pain
- Increase emotional integration for clarity and intention in decision making
- Smart with emotions, not just about them
- Appreciate your whole being - the interconnections of neurological, cognitive, sensory, emotional, and energetic fields and their contributions to stress
- Understand the inner feedback loops that hold you stuck in past patterns and behaviors
- Understand the feedback loops around you that hold you stuck in past patterns and behaviors



Benefits of harmonized growth in relationships:

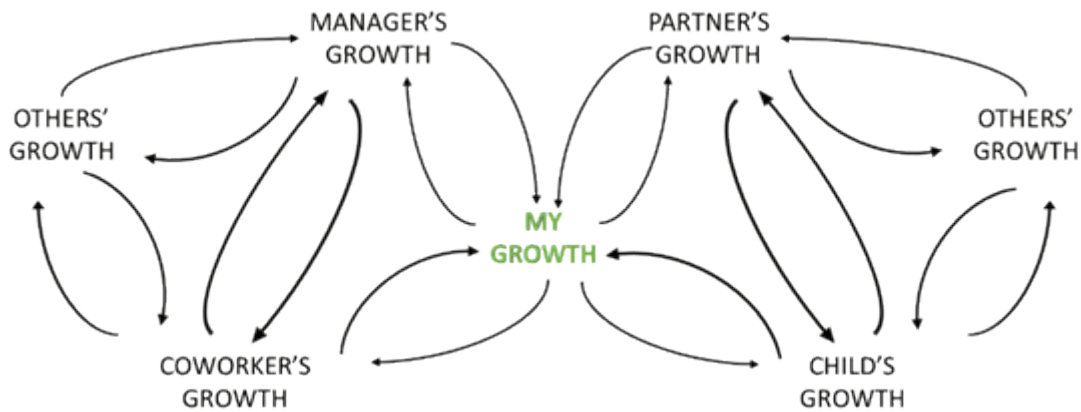
- Understand the dynamics between you and others to sort out contributions and responsibilities to shared dilemmas and identify who owns which problems to solve.
- Increase presence and gentleness with imperfections and struggles that are natural in others' growth and development.
- Increase ease with differences, unknowns, and uncertainties without threat responses to each other.
- Solve problems that can only be solved together.
- Find clarity on shared goals and direction without rigidity to outcomes or paths.
- Effectively evolve systems stuck in the status quo with negative feedback loops holding them stuck.



Self Leadership allows us to not only see the interconnections on the inside that create inner distress, it also allows us to see our contributions to problems without self judgment or shame, without blaming others. Let's be real – just because something is out of your awareness doesn't mean it isn't happening!



Dynamic Leadership goes beyond awareness to proactively seeing the continual dual feedback loops between people—intentional or unintentional, spoken or unspoken, movement toward or movement away. Dynamics set the tone of the home and the culture of an organization. Regardless of what is said or done, dynamics are felt.



Unrest and conflict (aggressive or passive) between people mirrors the tension and disconnection in our inner protectors, running on outdated patterns. As you lean into harmonized growth, you'll find comfort, compassion, and courage to be with the uncomfortable feelings of personally changing so the systems can evolve.

If we operate from the protective parts of our earlier development, we show up as a threat to others. We filter others as a threat when they are not. It is in our biology, most of it established in the first 18 months of life, and can be transformed through harmonized growth. Humans are an open system, continually capable of restoration and growth within, so we can be an interconnected presence with others for their restoration and growth. Humans who stay stuck limit others' development. We can't not do this!

So, if you want others to change, see yourself in the interconnected system, learn the protective survival patterns at play, and reduce the dependence on your own outdated protectors - for both of you.

If you are tired of being responsible for everybody else, learn how that over-functioning serves a purpose for your internal dynamics. Once the inner dysregulation is resolved, you can stop being over-responsible for others and let others grow. You can be a stimulus for their growth, yet you have to do your work first.



Harmonized growth sets you up to be a leader in systemic change.

From a place of Self Leadership, courage and compassion are foundations for action in the direction of systemic growth. You don't have to know now the direction of your passion. It will be revealed. Excitedly, there can be a new experience of clarity of direction with a detachment of outcome. Freedom to allow others to engage with their talents and passions, moving in unison to a shared vision.

Growth is yours for the taking.

With curiosity and compassion, harmonized growth meets you where you are. Build self-understanding to be the expert of you. Access the information and opinions from endless others, near and far, that know what they know in their context. You develop clarity on how to use it, and what matters most for you.

Grow In the direction that matters for you to the extent you desire.

Your vision and desires may be for yourself, your family, your profession, the organizations and systems you find yourself in, or even the world. Harmonized growth is a roadmap forward. Your empowerment is at the heart of it, even if it's hard to find right now.

Shifting from protection to connection and intention is our empowerment.

No one can empower you. You can't empower others. Empowerment is a fundamental shift from the inside outward.

Your Next Step

You made it through a LOT of information. What are you thinking? How are you feeling?

It's all information for you. Notice what sparked you. Go back through and highlight what gave you a positive charge, what irritated you. What kept you reading to this point? My hope is that something got your attention. My hope is that there's been enough appeal to your intellect to connect to your heart. Your desire for things to be different - your life, your work, your parenting, your wellbeing.

Join the community of harmonized growth.

Come where you are welcome however you are thinking and feeling. Expand your capacity to welcome how others are thinking and feeling, even if lived experiences took it out of you. Find openness and curiosity to it all, for your growth and wellbeing.

Master the dynamics within you for your health and well-being, and bring yourself to your best living.

Master the dynamics between you and others for your own growth. And be a gentle presence for others to grow and bring themselves to their best living.

Mastering them simultaneously is living your best life while others can live their best lives from the inside out.



Listen to yourself. You're worth it.

- It's ok to be fed up and tired of how things are!
- Tired of not being _____ enough.
- Tired of not speaking up or not being able to hold back (they are opposite sides of the same coin).
- Tired of being tired.
- Irritated by all you put into things and don't feel appreciated - although you may be dismissing the feeling.
- Struggling because you don't know how to help your kids.
- So done with the politics at work.
- Accepting that what you've been trying hasn't worked or hasn't been sustainable.

Where do I start?

[Sign up for our newsletter](#) for ongoing tips and information to foster harmonized growth. This will be the first place to learn about upcoming offerings of the Harmonized Growth Primer.

Don't want to wait? [Contact Shelly](#) to get started with [individual, family, or group coaching](#) or a customized course.

