

The Use of Mutual Learning for Relational Self-Fulfillment

Emerging interpersonal possibilities for the new year and beyond.

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Posted on PSYCHOLOGY TODAY on Dec 21, 2021

"In conversation, we can hold thoughts and reflect on problems sometimes for hours on end...Human thought is inherently dialogic."—David Graeber and David Wengrow from [The Dawn of Everything](#)



"Buddha Wreath"
Source: © Kenneth Silvestri

One night years ago in the mid-eighties on a snowy December evening, I was waiting to meet a friend in a tavern near Rockefeller Center. I found myself sitting at the bar next to then-Mayor Ed Koch. I said hello and introduced myself and he looked at me and said, "How am I doing?" I gave him, most likely, a similar answer that I am sure many others who had anything to do with this, the largest city in the country would have: "You seem to be doing well." I then began to describe my goings and comings. When I paused, he said, "How are we doing?" He got it and our dialogue continued. We both understood at that moment the value of a relational context.

Ever since then, I make it a special holiday gift to myself and those close to me, to ask "How are we doing?" When you think about communication, it is all about relationships, spontaneity, and some improvisation that allows us to eventually and ongoingly know ourselves. It is a quest to find out what differences you would like to make in your life which only come to fruition through

ongoing win-win volleys. It is a segue to contexts of where you are and where you want to be in your life's journey. In between that gap is where many answers will emerge that have been submerged.

This takes what is commonly known as *mindfulness* to another level, or more importantly, to a second level of change. It is beyond being in the present or the "now," which can be very static. In Western society, we have become overly adapted to thinking either inductively or deductively. However, this ends up with an emphasis on measuring content or isolating and narrowing our perceptions resulting in labels and topics without context. For example, words like *education*, *industry*, *politics*, etc., all lack relational contexts. Education, for instance, is not the thing or even the terrain of learning; it consists of infinite ways to experience differences. However, when we contextualize our everyday actions and behaviors, we are no longer confined to just content. We are in perpetual evolving motion. This encourages behaviors and actions from so many other interactions, which any artist can tell you is the grist for resolving conflict and allows for emerging creativity. It is the process of abduction that is between induction and deduction. Something to be seen as the prelude to evolution and understanding complexity. Nora Bateson, president of the International Bateson Institute, calls this process "aphanipoiesis," which describes "how life coalesces toward vitality in unseen ways." It is a place where we can hypothesize and open our subconscious to everything that was and will be.

Further within that gap, there are a multitude of possibilities. The result is the unheard, or formerly thought to be unknown, which surprisingly emerges. We can use this opportunity to improvise and merge our body and mind. A caveat is to not succumb to habit or over-adaption. In other words, not just being only in the present again. This is where we need to constantly use a wider lens that simultaneously consists of zooming in and out to navigate our journey. This will overcome habitual adaptation which is just another form of addiction. It all leads to the gift and wisdom of understanding how we and everything are interdependent.

What helps with this relational self-fulfillment process is to not depend as much as possible on nouns, since they limit our sense of being. Emphasizing verbs, for instance, gives you more of an opportunity to search for differences and possibilities to enhance your life. So, think about context and how your relationships simultaneously are part of even wider contextual horizons. This recognition encourages us to assertively understand our part of all the collaborative patterns within our environment. It will help explain how not only trees are communicating, near animals who are defecating, while leaves are mulching, creating places for insects to hold back erosion, and so on and so on. Our ecosystem, of which we are a vital part of (and the worse

offender of its health) can be described as a relationship with foresting, meadowing, schooling, "familying," etc.

In this time of year, the rewards of relational explorations lead to profound possibilities of warmth with family, friends, and our socioeconomic environments. Having such a vision to look forward allows us to be an active mitigating part with many rewarding gifts. Happy holidays now and all year every year!.