



Consciousness Training for Our Changing World

## Igniting Positive Change that Lasts: How to Design Self-Directed Behavior Change Curriculums

By Paula Claire Sellars

Leaders are visionaries of human possibility. They see into futures that stretch people. Whatever their field or product, by their very nature they ask people to grow and change - sometimes from absolute necessity, sometimes toward brilliant inspiration. Leaders yield specific, behavioral change that brings their vision into dynamic, living, breathing, results-producing reality.

According to John Kotter, a Harvard Business School professor, changing the behavior of people is the most important challenge for businesses navigating a turbulent world. I would add that changing the behavior of people is also the most important challenge in healing our social, economic, healthcare, environmental and cultural issues as well. "The central issue is never strategy, structure, culture, or systems," Kotter says. "The core of the matter is always about changing the behavior of people."

But, herein lies the rub: Often, people do not know how to change consciously.

Let's pause. Notice we have not said, "People are reluctant to change," or "People resist change." Not so – at least not inherently. In fact, we change constantly, at every level of our being, as does the outside world – rapidly! Rather, reluctance and resistance to change are byproducts of a missing internal skill set. In short, when people are being asked to forgo habitual behavior, and change to new behavior, they must be taught more than simply what to change. People must be taught how to change consciously. They must be given the inner skills to self motivate and maintain the change, even in "untrained" conditions.

"What" happens outside the person. "What" is the outcome of the change. "How" happens inside the person. "How" is the experience inside the person that causes new action.

This paper presents a training design model that facilitates a new experience of personal power, resulting in creative behavioral outcomes.



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This white paper will:

- ✓ Introduce a new theory in behavior change training.
- ✓ Describe briefly two large-scale, social change curriculums in which the theory has been utilized, so that they can be accessed as examples throughout the paper.
- ✓ Identify 5 training components that cause self motivated, self determined behavior change in individuals and in large groups.
- ✓ Link these components directly to their behavioral benefits.

### The Vibrational Change Theory™

The Vibrational Change Theory™ is an experiential, behavior-change model that causes participants to make self-directed, behavioral changes in alignment with the positive vision of the skills being taught. The model opens creative possibilities in participants that even their leaders cannot foresee, because the model's impact is inherently multidimensional. The Vibrational Change Theory™ is particularly useful as a large-scale, social change model. The model is derived from how individuals consciously change.

The conceptual framework of the Vibrational Change Theory™ consists of the following basic understandings:

- The acquisition of new knowledge (facts) does not alone motivate new behavior.
- Top-down mandates in a hierarchical system do not alone motivate new behavior.
- Fear or avoidance of a negative outcome does not motivate new behavior. What's more, participants do not learn well in a condition of fear or external demand. Fear can motivate a short-term, reactive response, but it does not motivate a well-integrated choice response. Thus, fear is not a good emotional motivator.

Instead,

- A person's behavior change is motivated primarily by a desire that is personal to him or her.
- The person experiences that personal desire as having a collective purpose. A "desire" is defined here as a feeling of aspiration for a new, positive possibility.



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- The experience of desire causes a marked shift in the person's vibration, their energy, their being.
- That vibrational shift allows new behavioral possibilities to come into awareness that were not accessible to the person in their previous vibration. Thus,
- Behavior change results from a participant's direct, felt- experience of a new possibility that has both personal and collective benefit.
- The direct experience of personal and collective purpose shifts a person's felt-motivation, their energetic vibration, from external locus of control (fear/requirement) to an internal locus of control (desire/contribution).
- This vibrational shift, coupled with action-based skills and community interaction, makes behavior change measurable and sustainable over time, even in "untrained" conditions. That is, participants are able to generalize their new skill set, moving their feeling of new possibility into action in unforeseeable and multidimensional ways.
- Behavior change feels natural and easy inside the new energetic vibration.

## Two Large-Scale Social Change Curriculums

To serve as examples later in this white paper, two large-scale, social change curriculums will be introduced that utilize the Vibrational Theory of Change™ as their underpinning model.

Stewards of Children: Adults Resolving Child Sexual Abuse in Community is an international, community-based curriculum that inspires adults to take personal responsibility for protecting children from sexual abuse. Developed in 2004 for the non-profit Darkness to Light, Stewards of Children is an uplifting, skills-based curriculum that is comprised of a film and self directed workbook. Stewards of Children can be accessed as an interactive, online training, or as a live, facilitator led experience. It is used by organizations that serve children, and by parents and other adults in protecting their own children.

Using an effective film montage of adult survivors of child sexual abuse, experts in related fields, a hosted teaching component, and a self directed workbook, Stewards of Children causes specific behavioral change at the individual level, and enables adults to partner in creating healthy and safe communities for children. [www.darkness2light.org](http://www.darkness2light.org)

To keep this section brief, a discussion of Stewards of Children's reach and third party evaluation information has been reserved for the end of this paper.



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Partnerships in Motion: A Renaissance in Aging is a curriculum also consisting of an integrated film and workbook. Developed for VistaLynk Solutions LLC, the program uses both a hosted teaching component and a dynamic range of aging individuals and their partners –be they friends, family, or the organizations for which they work. Partnerships in Motion explores the visionary questions, “What are the basic, inner skills that develop inside people who are lit up and fully engaged as they age, come what may?” and “What makes a satisfying, rich, purposeful experience of older age, not only for aging persons but for everybody in relationship to them?”

The curriculum is an exuberant representation of Elders and their Partners, all bringing their desires, purposes and loves into their families and communities in a mutually contributing way. Partnerships in Motion targets the Boomer generation as they approach Aging, those who are aging themselves, and caregivers of those who are aging. It shifts the paradigm of Aging from decline and diminishment to inspiration, partnership and contribution. The program has not yet been evaluated, as it is newly released in Spring of 2009.

What follows are training components used in both curriculums. These components are experienced by the participant as a hologram (meaning, “total recording”). That is, each component part contains the whole, and happens simultaneously in an integrated fashion. Each of these components, when provided as an experiential whole, facilitates behavior change in the individual. These components are necessary for virtually any behavioral changes that are sought, be they in the workplace, personal choices, (i.e. health and wellness), or in social/community groups. Trainings that include these components allow dynamic, self-motivated behavior change in individuals and in large groups.

### Training Components

It should be noted that these components are presented here in a logical framework, but in actual practice they happen non-linearly, in an integrated fashion.

#### Catalyze Vibration

The term “vibration”, when applied to the human being, might be thought of as his resonance, his way of being, the energy that person emits and creates from in any



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given moment. Unless we are very skillful with creating our vibration consciously, it is usually changeable with our circumstances.

My vibration is very different when I am sitting by a babbling spring, in a wooded grove, on a cool, sun drenched morning, dressed in a warm cotton sweatshirt, than when I am stranded in a traffic jam, on the way to an important business meeting, exhaust fumes billowing, with my air conditioning not working. Brook-side, I might have an inspired conversation with God, easily resolve an impasse at work, or create my next piece of poetry. Traffic-jammed, I blow the horn, curse and sweat, and imagine my financial ruin.

None of these results are a product of my circumstances directly (well, maybe the sweating); but rather of my vibrational state. My vibration and the state of my consciousness are one and the same. My vibration in any given moment is the emanation of my thinking, feeling and energy. My vibration shapes what seems possible.

Vibration is primary. Behavior is the result.

Because vibration shapes what seems possible, it directly shapes behavior. It is important that training offer participants a vibration that matches the desired change. For instance, it is necessary that participants of Stewards of Children feel empowered to take the risks involved in protecting children from sexual abuse. Thus, every person represented in the film, be they adult survivors, experts, or the host, carries the vibration of empowerment, determination, self responsibility and hope. No one in the film carries the energy of victimization or blame.

This creates what I call "vibrational consistency." The participant experiences a "community" of people, all carrying the same energetic vibration in their own unique way. He receives a consistent, energetic imprint that shapes what seems possible to him. He experiences the same vibrational message, being played out in the varied lives of many different characters. He notices the multidimensional use of that same vibration, and his awareness widens for the behavioral application of that vibration within his own circumstances.

In establishing vibration, it is also essential to use what I call "language of possibility". Borrowing another Stewards of Children example, we do not establish our vision for children as one of "safety." "Safety" can imply an external threat. We need only be "safe" if there is something to be "safe from." The moment "safety" is used as a desired outcome, participants start unconsciously hearing "problem", and begin assuming their typical response to problems (denial, fear,



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blaming, searching for solutions). They become oriented around a threat, rather than a possibility, yielding very different behavioral results. Using the “language of possibility”, we instead establish our desire as children being “creative, kind, and whole.” This desire throws a grappling hook out into positive possibility for children, rather than tethering participants to a problem that needs to be extinguished.

Offer and demonstrate a vibration that lifts participants into possibility.  
And trust the participant to create from it.

Vibrational consistency and language of possibility yields behavior change that is generalize-able and lasting for the participant. The participant can feel the state of being that produces the new behavior. There is no energy being spent on that which we do not want to create.

What’s more, it is virtually impossible to give a behavioral directive for every potential circumstance. Instead, we must rely on participants’ ability to think and “feel on their feet”. Participants may not be able to remember all of the behavioral directives, nor will those directives always be applicable from situation to situation. Nevertheless, the vibrational imprint remains as an inner directive that is kinesthetically memorable. That inner directive drives new, creative choices.

## Illuminate Desire

Recall that for purposes here, desire is defined as a feeling of aspiration for a new positive possibility. ‘Key word here: feeling. Desire is not meant here as an end result, but rather as an experience of oneself.

Desires:  
e.g. Vitality  
Wholeness  
Peace  
Empowerment

Design your training to illuminate desire in a participant for lasting behavioral results. Call forward a new behavioral intention that is personally meaningful to the participant. That behavioral intention must be broad enough for the participant to apply in her life in her own way.

For example, many people can relate to the desire for “vitality.” “Vitality” ignites a feeling. In Partnerships in Motion, we declare, “Movement is the key to vitality.”



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Thus, the behavioral directive is “Keep Moving”. People in the film illustrate that “Keep Moving” can be taking Pilates lessons, learning to use a computer, moving to a new home, taking up a hobby, getting a new dog. The message is, of course, that there are many ways to “Keep Moving,” and that the intentional purpose of movement was “vitality”. Vitality is the desire that the behavioral directive serves.

A benefit of illuminating desire in your participant is that the behavioral application of desire is multidimensional. Your participant will create new behaviors to express the desire that even you have not yet imagined.

### Create Dynamic Tension

Dynamic tension can be described as the palpable gap between the fact of what is and the desire for what could be.

Design your behavior change training toward the desire for what could be, not from a reaction to what is. The latter is a frequent mistake. Training should name what is, but it should not be designed in reaction to what is. When the training is designed around “a problem”, the problem itself will dictate what solutions are available. But when the training is designed in resolute relationship to what could be, “the problem” becomes one of many opportunities to apply the desire.

Here’s an example from Stewards of Children. Child sexual abuse is a problem. This is indisputable. It’s tempting to design prevention training like a war on sexual abuse, or a war on sexual offenders. It’s tempting to focus on damage and fear, and then give behavioral directives to combat it.

Instead, the curriculum presents the new possibility of adults becoming stewards of children (vibration), as they support children in becoming creative, kind, and whole (desire). The training does not ignore the problem, but the problem is

If a problem is to be the source of a new behavior, then the problem must be maintained to sustain the new behavior. And that is going to be a problem.

simply a new opportunity to get active with the desire. The behavioral directives are such things as “eliminate one-adult/one-child opportunities”, “know the signs of sexual abuse” and “talk about it.” But these directives are supported by the desire for “creative, kind and whole”, not opposed by the intractability of the problem of sexual abuse.

Problems don’t motivate. Possibilities motivate.



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Using dynamic tension allows the tension itself, between what is and what could be, to be fuel for the new behavior. Dynamic tension maintains awareness of the problem, but orients behavior around the desire. Although participants are taking corrective action, the impetus for change is not the problem, but rather the challenge of who they could be.

Challenge people to become who they already want to be.

### Teach Personal Risk

Personal risk occurs when a participant must take a new action to fulfill the desire, and the outcome of that new action is unknown.

Often the trouble with behavior change training is not getting the person to do something new – it's getting them to do something new in a lasting way. Personal risk is the process by which the dynamic tension is resolved ongoing-ly.

Think of it this way. Behavior change does not occur in a vacuum. Each new behavior, each risk, begets a new set of outcomes that must then be navigated. Therefore, it is important to make conscious for the participant that fulfilling their desire is inherently risky. It involves taking actions that one has never taken before, with outcomes that are unknown.

The capacity to risk involves changing something fundamental within the participant. That is, the participant must make a conscious choice that knowing the outcome is less important than fulfilling the desire of who they want to be. The curriculum must normalize the experience of risk. It must frame personal risk as inherent to living in a satisfying way.

Teach personal risk not as an action to get from here to there. Teach it as a way of being that fortifies the experience of living itself.

For example, participants of Stewards of Children are invited early in the curriculum to identify their desires for the wellbeing of their children. They are trained in what it feels like to take risks to fulfill that desire. Later, in their workbooks, they are asked to identify fears and beliefs that could stop them from talking openly with their children about sexual abuse. And then they are asked to write a few



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sentences as if they are telling a child about the value and privacy of her body. Here the risk is made explicit- talking to children about sexual abuse. But it is contextualized in the dynamic tension between what is (their fears) and what could be (having a conversation that creates wellbeing for their child.)

Using personal risk as a training component prepares the participant for ongoing behavior change that is self directed, moment by moment. Teaching personal risk enables the participant to sustain not only the behavior change itself. It enables them to navigate the new circumstances that result from the new behavior.

### Mobilize Community

Vibration is magnified in community. Learning that takes place in community is more expedient than solo learning because human beings have the capacity to entrain with one another. A person's ability to sustain a new vibrational state is much more robust when he is enfolded in a community that also carries that vibration. Since learning a new way of being is "remember, forget, remember, forget", the community "reminds" the individual naturally during moments of "forgetting".

Vibration is contagious.

To mobilize community, have participants experience your training in a group. Also, use a teaching modality in which people who share traits with participants serve as examples of both vibration and behavior. For example, in Partnerships in Motion, the video portrays everyday elders and their partners fulfilling their chosen purposes, communicating successfully about difficult issues, and partnering to create satisfaction. Participants can see themselves in the people in the video and receive a vibrational imprint for what the new behaviors may feel like.

There is more experiential validity when the "teachers" are experienced as members of the community themselves, rather than a teacher outside the community. A sense of "we-ness" and affinity develops. Participants feel, "if they can do it, I can do it."

Provide the experience of the community teaching itself.

Learning in community also allows the participant to experience their personal desire as having collective benefit. This reinforces a sense of purpose and a feeling of being part of something greater than oneself.



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The experience of being a contribution raises one's vibration, is self-reinforcing, and is reinforcing to the group.

Catalyze Vibration

Illuminate Desire

Create Dynamic Tension

Teach Personal Risk

Mobilize Community

The foregoing are 5 primary curriculum design components that enable behavior change. There are numerous others that may be employed. You are welcome to call me to discuss your behavior change training ideas and needs.

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[www.cliffjumping.net](http://www.cliffjumping.net)

Participate in Stewards of Children at [www.stewardsofchildren.com](http://www.stewardsofchildren.com).

Participate in Partnerships in Motion at [www.partnershipsinmotion.com](http://www.partnershipsinmotion.com).

The Vibrational Theory of Change™ is originated by Phoenix Possibilities Inc. The theory underpins our premier program, The Cliff Jumping® Program, as well as all of our other personal development programs.

### Stewards of Children Evaluation Discussion

As of this writing, Stewards of Children is used in 45 states across the U.S., the District of Columbia, and in 10 countries internationally.\* The film and workbook have been translated into Spanish. The program has been studied in academic settings and by the National Crime Victim's Research Center, funded by the US Centers for Disease Control. In 2007, Darkness to Light won the McGruff™ Crime Prevention Award of Excellence in part for its dissemination of Stewards of Children.

The live, facilitator led version of Stewards of Children was studied by the College of Charleston in 2005. Findings indicated a significant difference in the increase of knowledge and attitudes. Two months after training, participants experienced less



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than a 10% decrease in knowledge gain and attitude change, and showed a significant increase in behaviors aimed at the prevention of sexual abuse.

In 2006-2007 the web-based version was studied by the Center for Child and Family Studies of the University of South Carolina, funded by a US Department of Commerce Technology Opportunity Program grant. Evaluation findings show evidence of increased knowledge between the intervention and comparison groups, a significant attitudinal changes in those who participated in the training, and a significant increase in the use of prevention behaviors by those in the intervention group.

In 2006-2008, a controlled experimental study of the impact of Stewards of Children on child care professionals' primary and secondary prevention efforts is being conducted, including changes in knowledge, attitudes, and reports of preventative behavior over time, in relation to the prevention of child sexual abuse.

This study is funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and is being conducted by Alyssa Rheingold, Ph.D. at the National Crime Victim's Research Center at the Medical University of South Carolina. This evaluation will also compare the different modes of presentation (i.e. online vs. in-person)

This will be the second controlled experimental study performed on the Stewards of Children program and will include multiple site replication, evaluating each format and comparing the effectiveness of both. These finding should be available in early 2009.

\*Facilitators of Stewards of Children are presently training adults to protect children from sexual abuse in the following countries. This diverse cultural application demonstrates the universality of the vibrational skills being taught within the curriculum.

USA	Honduras
Antigua	Iceland
Australia	India
Canada	Peru
Cayman Islands	Spain
Guatemala	

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